DIRECT INVESTIGATION REPORT

SPECIAL EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

February 2008

Office of The Ombudsman

Hong Kong

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Direct Investigation on Special Examination Arrangements for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

Background

1. In the report of our direct investigation into assessment of children with Specific Learning Difficulties ("SpLD") in April 2007, we indicated that we would follow up with an investigation to examine the support services for these students. As examinations are an integral part of our education system and have considerable impact on the future of young people, for further education or career development, The Ombudsman decided to look into this aspect as a matter of priority.

2. Accordingly, on 19 April 2007, The Ombudsman declared a direct investigation, under section 7(1)(a)(ii) of The Ombudsman Ordinance, Cap 397, to examine:

(a) special arrangements for internal examinations and assessments in primary and secondary schools for students with SpLD;

(b) the role of the education authorities (the then Education and Manpower Bureau ("EMB") before 1 July 2007 and the Education Bureau ("EDB") since 1 July 2007) in providing these special arrangements;

(c) special arrangements by the Hong Kong Examination Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") for public examinations for these students;

(d) coordination in connection with the provision of the arrangements –

 (i) among EDB, schools and HKEAA; and

 (ii) between Government and non-Government organisations ("NGO");

(e) promotion of awareness of such special arrangements among parents, students, teachers and school authorities.

3. In addition to studying documents provided by EDB and HKEAA, we interviewed parents and personnel of schools and NGOs.

What is SpLD?

4. To recap, SpLD are a class of condition, occurring in a child of average or above average intelligence, characterised by a significant delay in one or more areas of learning. Despite adequate intelligence and education opportunities, children with SpLD often have

problems with one or more of the basic processes used in understanding or using spoken or written language, such as:

(a) Listening
(b) Speaking
(c) Reading
(d) Writing
(e) Mathematical calculations

Further information is at **Annex 1**. Problem in reading and writing is the most common type of SpLD encountered in this investigation.

Why are Special Examination Arrangements Necessary?

5. It is Government policy to provide special examination arrangements for students with SpLD and other students with special education needs ("SEN"). The Disability Discrimination Ordinance Code of Practice on Education (issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission) states that educational establishments have to provide reasonable accommodation[1] for these students. In the Code, special arrangements are considered "reasonable accommodation".

6. Special examination arrangements are intended to "level the playing field" by removing the disadvantages brought about by SpLD but not central to the knowledge or skills being examined, provided there is:

(a) no unfair advantage over other students;
(b) no interference with the assessment objective.

Special Arrangements in Internal Examinations

7. EDB has issued the following guidelines:

(a) "A Guide to Teaching: Understanding and Helping Students with Special Educational Needs (2001)";
(b) "Guidelines on Internal Assessment (2002)"; and
(c) "Principles and Strategies for Assessment for Students with Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools (2004)".

8. EDB regards special examination arrangements for internal tests and examinations as "part of the school-based support measures for students with SEN", including SpLD. Precise arrangements are to be made by schools based on the difficulties

[1] Para. 12.2 of the Code states, "Educational establishments have the obligation to make reasonable accommodations in their existing programmes, services, facilities and benefits in order to meet the needs of their students, or prospective students with disabilities, unless such changes impose unjustifiable hardship."

of their students, with reference to the guidelines of EDB and with advice from specialists such as educational psychologists. EDB considers that schools should be accountable for such arrangements. Parents can approach EDB for assistance if there is disagreement between them and the school.

9. Special examination arrangements for internal examinations may include:

(a) extending examination time;

(b) enlarging the space in the answer sheet for students to write their answers;

(c) enlarging the font size of examination papers;

(d) reading out the questions to students for non-language subjects;

(e) allowing use of a special room under separate invigilation;

(f) alternative method of answering (e.g. oral response, circling the answers);

(g) use of computer for word processing; and

(h) supervised breaks

10. In the course of our investigation, EDB has introduced the following improvement measures:

(a) reorganised its teacher training programme on SpLD to include 90-hour advanced and 60-hour thematic courses under the five-year professional development framework on Integrated Education;

(b) introduced the "Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students" in the 2007/08 school year.

Special Arrangements in Public Examinations

Procedures

11. Candidates with SpLD may apply to HKEAA for special arrangements in public examinations:

(a) in September/October of the Secondary 4 and 6 academic year ("early application"); or

(b) in September/October of the Secondary 5 and 7 academic year ("second phase application").

12. Each application by an SpLD candidate has to be made by:

(a) completion of an application form;

(b) submission of an assessment report form duly signed by a qualified psychologist and the head of the school. The candidate's needs must be supported by:
(i) records of special arrangements in the candidate's school;
(ii) an up-to-date psychological assessment report.

13. In the course of our investigation, HKEAA has made the following improvement measures:

(a) clarified its requirement for "qualified psychologist" to include "educational/clinical psychologist with professional practice training";
(b) refined the wording "up-to-date psychological assessment report" to "within three years before the public examination";
(c) revised the assessment report form - a major revision is to require the psychologist who signs the form to confirm that the candidate has SpLD and is in need of special arrangements in the public examination;
(d) clarified the requirements for the psychological assessment report, including a conclusion on whether the candidate is a case of SpLD and recommendations on types of special arrangements required.

14. Applications are normally processed in three stages:

(a) HKEAA Secretariat staff screens each application for completeness of information and supporting documents;
(b) Vetting Team considers whether there is a firm diagnosis of SpLD and whether the special arrangements requested are reasonable. It then makes recommendations for the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with SpLD ("Task Group").
(c) The Task Group makes a decision to approve or reject the application.
(d) The decision of the Task Group is posted to the candidate's school in February of the year following the submission of application. From early 2007, notification letters are copied to the candidates.

15. If dissatisfied, candidates may request in writing for review by an Appeal Panel for Special Needs Candidates ("Appeal Panel") within one week from the date of the notification letter, giving reasons and supporting documents. Outcome of the appeal is conveyed by post to the candidate concerned before the start of the examination.

Special Arrangements Granted

16. Special examination arrangements for public examinations may include:

(a) extra time;

(b) to allow writing on only one side of an answer book, or on alternate lines or circling multiple-choice answers on a question paper;

(c) special format question papers, e.g. one-side printing or enlarged fonts;

(d) specially arranged centre (e.g. in a classroom instead of a hall);

(e) special seating in a centre (e.g. near the front or back of an examination centre);

(f) supervised breaks in examinations lasting 90 minutes or more; and

(g) other special arrangements such as use of computer in answering questions considered on an individual basis.

Observations and Opinions

Preamble

17. Since we declared this direct investigation in April 2007, EDB and HKEAA have introduced a number of improvement measures. Such action is clearly positive and commendable.

Assessment Tool for Secondary Schools

18. Our case studies show that, prior to September 2007, in the absence of an assessment tool for secondary school students, HKCEE candidates had to be assessed by assessment tool for much younger children (in one case: assessment tool for children aged 10.5 was used for a 16-year-old). This raises the question whether the findings are accurate and fair in deciding on the provision or otherwise of special examination arrangements for secondary school students. With the recent introduction of the new assessment tool for junior secondary school students, we expect this situation to improve significantly. However, we consider it prudent for EDB to assess the effectiveness of the new tool and keep in view the need for further development of assessment tool for secondary school students.

Special Arrangements in Internal Examinations

Monitoring Measures

19. While EDB issues guidelines to schools and provides professional advice, actual implementation of special examination arrangements is left to individual school administration. While this is understandable and to some extent logical with

school-based management, it is a matter of concern that practices may vary significantly from school to school. To ensure common understanding of their obligation under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and consistency of practices among schools, we consider some form of monitoring measures necessary.

Support for Schools

20. Case studies and feedback from NGOs, parents and schools show that some schools are meticulous in making special examination arrangements for SpLD students; some do the minimum; others pay lip service and some simply turn a blind eye. This could be due to lack of knowledge among some teachers or the heavy caseload of educational psychologists.

21. EDB's intention is that special examination arrangements should be discussed and decided among teachers, parents and educational psychologists in Student Support Teams or case conferences. Feedback from different stakeholders is collected and addressed during the consultation visits. We shall look into the effectiveness of such EDB practice in our next phase of investigation.

Review of Special Examination Arrangements

22. The then EMB surveyed the views of primary school personnel on special examination arrangements from May to July 2005. It did not cover secondary schools. Apart from this survey, there is no systematic review to ascertain:

(a) whether and how special examination arrangements are implemented in schools;
(b) whether they are consistent among schools; and
(c) whether they are adequate for the needs of students.

Special Arrangements in Public Examinations

Statistics on SpLD Applicants

23. The yearly statistics on applications for special arrangements in HKCEE and HKALE from 2003 to 2007 and their outcomes are as follows:

HKCEE

Examination Year	Applications Received	Applications Approved	*No. rejected*	Appeal Cases	
				Approved	Rejected
2003	1	0	*1*	-	-
2004	8	8	*0*	-	-
2005	12	12	*0*	-	-
2006	28	28*	*1#*	1	0
2007	48	46**	*3##*	3	0

* Of which 3 cases were treated as physical/other disabilities

** Of which 4 cases were treated as physical/other disabilities

One candidate whose application was treated as a case of physical disability by the Task Group was dissatisfied with the decision.

One candidate was dissatisfied with the refusal of the request for the use of a particular computer software, although her request for other special arrangements was approved.

HKALE

School Year	Applications Received	Applications Approved	*No. Rejected*
2003	0	0	*0*
2004	0	0	*0*
2005	2	1	*1**
2006	1	1	*0*
2007	4	4	*0*

* No appeal was received from the rejected case.

Source: HKEAA statistics

Case Studies

24. We have studied five applications: four that went on to appeal and one that was approved by the Task Group. Selection of these cases is not meant to be statistically representative. However, we have identified areas for improvement from these cases.

Tardiness in Conveying Task Group's Decisions

25. HKEAA Secretariat staff took a long time to dispatch to schools the notification of the Task Group's decisions: the time lapse ranged from 28 to 35 days. We consider such time gap excessive and should be shortened to allow more time for the applicant to prepare for appeal.

26. HKEAA explained that it processes applications from all categories of SEN

candidates "in one go". The aim is to ensure that all applications are handled with consistency and to avoid the feeling of uncertainty if applicants are notified at different times. However, in our view, there are basically four different outcomes for SpLD applicants:

(a) approval is given for special examination arrangements as requested;
(b) approval is for physical disabilities instead of SpLD;
(c) only partial approval is given; and
(d) all arrangements requested are rejected.

There is a case for notifying applicants in categories (b), (c) and (d) first, to allow them more time to consider appeal and take further action to satisfy HKEAA's requirements.

27. HKEAA introduced in April 2005 for the 2006 public examinations the "early application" option, i.e. to apply in Secondary 4 for special arrangements in HKCEE and in Secondary 6 for HKALE. Regrettably, few students have made use of this option.

Year	SpLD applications in HKCEE	Early applications in HKCEE	SpLD applications in HKALE	Early applications in HKALE
2006	25	9	1	1
2007	44	2	4	0

Source: HKEAA statistics

28. The "early application" option should:

(a) give ample time for HKEAA to process the applications;
(b) ease the stress on the students in awaiting the outcome;
(c) enable students to focus better on their studies without the burden of uncertainty;
(d) facilitate schools emulating the approved special arrangements, say, in mock examination, so that the students can familiarise themselves with those arrangements.

HKEAA should, therefore, consider measures to make application in Secondary 4 for HKCEE and Secondary 6 for HKALE a normal and common practice.

<u>Unreasonable Time Allowed for Appeals</u>

29. The time given for lodging an appeal is far too short. It is a time consuming process if further psychological assessment is sought for appeal. Officially, according to HKEAA guidelines, the deadline for appeal is one week. In the cases studied, the deadline ranges from five to 12 days. As the notification letter was sent through the post,

the duration actually given was even shorter than that stated in the letter.

Lack of Transparency

30. Our study shows that HKEAA did not state the reasons for rejection to the applicant concerned. Although HKEAA's rejection letter mentions a contact person and a telephone number for enquiries, we consider this not sufficient. In one case in which HKEAA had stated that the use of a particular computer software would "violate the assessment objectives", it did not elaborate on how reading out questions with the computer software would violate such objectives.

Different Opinions on Diagnosis

31. In three of the five cases that we studied, the Task Group rejected the applications despite support from educational psychologists and clinical psychologists. The Appeal Panel even noted in one case that "there were discrepant opinions on diagnosis and standard assessment tools for SpLD were not available". HKEAA states that there are always cases of candidates who have some degree of reading or writing difficulties but have not been diagnosed as confirmed cases of SpLD. The Task Group is cautious not to bring about "unfairness" to other candidates by giving special examination arrangements to marginal cases.

32. In this light, we consider it important to inform parents properly what the requirements are for obtaining special examination arrangements. We have, therefore, recommended greater transparency in the processing of applications. With the introduction of the new assessment tool and improvement measures undertaken by HKEAA, we hope that the discrepancies cited in the paragraph above will be minimised.

Need for Review of Criteria for Use of Computers

33. We consider that, in deciding whether use of computer should be permitted, views of the professionals (i.e. educational psychologists, doctors) consulted by the student concerned should be given weight in case of doubt. We note that HKEAA has revised the Guidelines for the 2008 public examinations to allow the use of computer for:

(a) illegible handwriting; or

(b) extremely slow handwriting speed.

We consider the new requirements more specific but may run the risk of being too restrictive.

Composition of the Task Group

34. Apart from the students themselves, those most concerned are their parents. It may be helpful to have parental representation on the Task Group as well.

Record Keeping

35. Our examination of the documents provided by HKEAA shows that, except for one case, no record is kept of the details of the deliberations of the Task Group or the Appeal Panel to document the reasons for a decision.

Administration of Examination Arrangements

36. In one case, a SpLD candidate was given wrong information about the examination centre he was to attend. HKEAA states that it has standing procedures to ensure that the correct special examination arrangements are in place for the candidates concerned. Although this may be an isolated case, it has highlighted the importance of cross-checking arrangements. We consider it necessary for HKEAA to review its current procedures.

Increase of SpLD students

37. With better understanding of SpLD, there is a dramatic increase of SpLD students since 2003/04 at both primary and secondary levels:

School Year	Primary	Secondary	Total
2003/04	1,195	165	1,360
2004/05	3,045	640	3,685
2005/06	5,534	1,096	6,630
2006/07 (as at 15.9.07)	6,110	2,760	8,870

Source: EDB statistics

(a) primary schools: an increase of 411% from 2003/04 to 2006/07
(b) secondary schools: an increase of 1573% from 2003/04 to 2006/07

38. The expected increase in the number of applications for special examination arrangements in the HKCEE and HKALE in future will have implications for the workload of HKEAA in processing these cases.

Public and Parental Awareness

39. It is important that parents are aware that they can approach EDB for assistance if there is disagreement between them and the school over the provision of special examination arrangements for their SpLD children. Although both EDB and HKEAA

have uploaded the relevant information on websites, not all students and parents have ready access to the Internet. Furthermore, the contents of some of the websites concerned are meant for professional teachers and are not easy for laymen to navigate. The assistance of parent-teacher associations and NGOs may be enlisted in dissemination of information.

Related Issues

40. We have identified several issues in this investigation for our next phase of study.

Decrease in Number of SpLD Students at Senior Secondary Level

41. A breakdown of the number of students with SpLD in secondary schools by level is as follows:

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total
2004/05*	303	206	85	32	13	1	0	640[2]
2005/06*	511	293	193	68	30	1	0	1,096[3]
2006/07*	874	471	283	152	68	5	1	1,854[4]

* as at 31 August of each school year

Source: EDB statistics

42. From the above statistics, it can be seen that :

(a) in the same school year, there are fewer SpLD students in the senior levels;

(b) the number of SpLD students steadily decline as they progress through secondary education –

(i) 93% of Secondary 1 students progressed to Secondary 3

(ii) 74% of Secondary 2 students progressed to Secondary 4

(iii) 80% of Secondary 3 students progressed to Secondary 5

(iv) 16% of Secondary 4 students progressed to Secondary 6

(v) 8% of Secondary 5 students progressed to Secondary 7

43. The drop in the number of SpLD students apparently making it to Secondary 6 and Secondary 7 is particularly significant. Very few seem to progress beyond Secondary 5.

44. EDB states that it has been advocating the creation of multiple exit pathways so

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[2] Number of schools where SpLD students are located = 240

[3] Number of schools where SpLD students are located = 286

[4] Number of schools where SpLD students are located = 318

that students have the opportunity to realise their potential by pursuing their interests and relative strengths. A student not pursuing higher academic studies may choose to go for vocational training.

45. We remain concerned over the notable drop in the number of SpLD students making it to senior secondary level and consider it an issue that warrants further investigation in our next phase of investigation.

Insufficient Recognition of SpLD

46. Our interviews show up schools where the teachers and staff are ignorant of SpLD and insensitive to the needs of SpLD students, sometimes to the point of being callous. This is unfortunate and must be remedied.

Students' Right to Public Examinations

47. Some parents we interviewed alleged that the schools have refused to submit their children's applications to sit for HKCEE. This is a serious allegation we have yet to verify. While we will look further into this topic in the next phase of study, we would remind school administration and parents that children have a right to education and students a right to public examinations. They should approach EDB for assistance if they encounter unreasonable refusal or rejection.

Recommendations

48. In this context, the Ombudsman makes 19 recommendations for EDB and HKEAA. Further details are at **Annex 2.**

Comments from EDB and HKEAA

49. EDB and HKEAA have made detailed comments on our report. We have incorporated their comments, where appropriate, in the final report.

Final Remarks

50. Meanwhile, representations from EDB and The Ombudsman's response are tabulated as follows:

<table>
<tr><th>Comments from EDB</th><th>The Ombudsman's Response</th></tr>
<tr><td>(a) Methodology of the Direct Investigation

The views provided to us by interviewees have not been cross-checked for reliability and validity before some of them are generalised to formulate conclusions and recommendations. Quoting unverified views risks endorsing some factually or conceptually incorrect statements and may not be fair to the whole school sector and the parties involved.</td><td>The views and comments from parents and school personnel were volunteered to us in confidence. In addition, privacy of the interviewees is also a concern. We have not, therefore, been able to go through a cross-checking process. However, their information enables us to glean issues perceived from an insider's perspective. We have set out those issues in our report as a prelude to our next phase of investigation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>(b) The approach to promote inclusive education

Support for students with SpLD is a relatively new development in Hong Kong that started only about a decade ago. Given that the Disability Discrimination Ordinance has already been in place, education and professional support for schools is the key to promoting inclusive practices in schools. It is more positive to facilitate schools to undergo a paradigm shift through encouragement and support.</td><td rowspan="2">We do not intend to infringe upon the policy of school-based management. However, we consider that suitable monitoring mechanism should be put in place to ensure that practices among schools are consistent and to review how good or bad they are doing. Bearing in mind examinations are an important part of the education system, the longer the students are denied a level playing field to develop and demonstrate their ability, the more detriments they are susceptible to in both their current education and further education or career development.</td></tr>
<tr><td>(c) Autonomy and accountability of schools

With greater autonomy and flexibility in management and administration, schools have to be accountable for their performance and operation. While EDB has a regulatory role over schools, it considers that our recommendations on monitoring run contrary to the principle of autonomy and accountability.</td></tr>
<tr><td>(d) Stress and workload of teachers

To address the concern of stress and workload of frontline teachers, introducing any new control measures by EDB should be a conscious decision with strong justifications.</td><td>We are aware of the concern over stress and workload of frontline teachers. Our recommendations are aimed for improving the support for the disadvantaged students and not increasing unnecessary administrative work for teachers.</td></tr>
</table>

Acknowledgements

51. The Ombudsman sincerely thanks those who have provided assistance in our investigation, including EDB and HKEAA, school personnel and NGOs, and certainly, parents of children with SpLD.

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Annex 1
(Para. 4)

Some Types of SpLD

(a) Dyslexia, a problem in reading and writing caused by difficulty in seeing the difference between letter or character shapes.

(b) Mathematics disorder whereby the individual has significant difficulties with concepts of number, quantities and computation not explained by general intellectual cognitive difficulties such as mental delay.

(c) Specific language impairment whereby the individual exhibits linguistic deficits affecting different aspects of linguistic performance, such as phonology (speech sounds), semantics (meaning), grammar and so on.

(d) Dyspraxia (developmental co-ordination disorder) whereby the individual has difficulties in gross and fine motor execution, in postural control and balance, and is often described as "clumsy".

(e) Visual spatial organization and perceptual disorders whereby the individual has difficulties in understanding spatial relations, left/right concepts, and in perceptual organization of nonverbal output (including for drawing and handwriting).

(f) Central auditory processing disorder whereby the individual has difficulties in processing and remembering language-related tasks.

Annex 2
(Para. 48)

Recommendations for Improvements

Special Arrangements in Internal Examinations (for EDB action)

Monitoring

(1) To remind school administration that special examination arrangements for students with SpLD in internal examinations are **a requirement** under the Ordinance.

(2) To monitor suitably the implementation of special examination arrangements in internal examinations to ensure consistency across the school sector.

Support for Schools

(3) To continue providing support to schools in deciding on special examination arrangements, for example, by organising practical workshops and experience-sharing among schools and experts in this field.

(4) To survey and assess the need for education psychology service and to plan for such provisions, reviewing critically the resources both in EDB and for outsourcing agencies, especially in helping schools to design and implement special examination arrangements for students with SpLD.

Review of Special Examination Arrangements

(5) To conduct a survey in both primary and secondary schools for feedback on the suitability of the different components of special arrangements in internal examinations and how such arrangements are provided.

Special Arrangements in Public Examinations (for HKEAA action)

Time-frame

(6) To set an earlier target time-frame for informing candidates, as soon as possible, of the Task Group's decision regarding their applications.

(7) To provide a more reasonable time-frame for appeals against rejection of applications.

(8) To consider measures to make the "early application" option a normal and common practice.

Transparency

(9) In case of rejection, to give reasons to enable candidates to consider further action.

Use of Computer

(10) To review, in consultation with the Task Group, application of the existing criteria for use of computer as part of the special examination arrangements, and to allow its use for other than motor problems as long as its use is supported by an educational psychologist and does not give the candidate unfair advantage over other candidates.

Composition of the Task Group

(11) To consider including a parent representative on the Task Group for a parental perspective and better understanding of the problems faced by students with SpLD.

Record Keeping

(12) To document the deliberations, in addition to decisions, of the Task Group and the Appeal Panel.

Administration of Examination Arrangements

(13) To review the standing procedures to ensure that the correct special arrangements are put in place.

Briefings for Educational Psychologists (for HKEAA action)

(14) To arrange in-depth briefings for educational psychologists in EDB and for outsourcing agencies on HKEAA's requirements for:

(a) the details necessary in the assessment reports;

(b) how recommendations for special examination arrangements should be made in assessment reports accompanying the candidate's application; and

(c) the validity period of the educational psychologist's assessment (within three years of the date of the public examination).

Public Awareness (for EDB and HKEAA action)

(15) To promote awareness of parents and students that they can approach the relevant School Development Officers of EDB for assistance if there is disagreement between them and the schools.

(16) To publicise the availability of special examination arrangements in internal as well as public examinations through easily accessible and comprehensible means, e.g. pamphlets.

(17) To step up liaison with the parent-teacher associations and NGOs to enlist their assistance for consultation and dissemination of information about special examination arrangements.

Assessment Tool for Secondary Schools (for EDB action)

(18) EDB, to keep in view the need for development of assessment tools for SpLD students.

Review of Resource Requirements (for HKEAA action)

(19) To review resource requirements in anticipation of increase in workload resulting from significant progressive increase in the number of applications for special examination arrangements.

LEGEND OF ABBREVIATIONS

Appeal Panel	Appeal Panel for Special Needs Candidates
CAC	Child Assessment Centre
CAS	Child Assessment Service
Code	Disability Discrimination Ordinance Code of Practice on Education
DH	Department of Health
EDB	Education Bureau
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
HA	Hospital Authority
HKALD	Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities
HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority
HKT-JS	Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students
IE	Integrated education
IRTP	Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme
New Initiative	New Initiative to Cater for Academic Low Achievers at Junior Secondary Levels
NFM	New Funding Mode
NGO	Non-Government organisations
Ordinance	Disability Discrimination Ordinance
SBRSP	School-Based Remedial Support Programme
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
Task Group	Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities

1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.1 On 19 April 2007, The Ombudsman published a Direct Investigation Report on Assessment of Children with Specific Learning Difficulties ("SpLD"). It was our plan, even then, to conduct follow-up investigations to examine support services, including special examination arrangements, for students with SpLD.

1.2 In the course of the investigation into assessment of children with SpLD, we received many views expressing concern about the adequacy of support being provided for these children. For examination arrangements, it is widely recognised by both local and overseas education and examinations authorities that special examination arrangements should be afforded to candidates with SpLD to enable them to bypass their gateway difficulties and to allow them to be academically assessed on equal footing with other candidates. As examinations are an integral part of our education system and have considerable impact on the future of young people, for further education or career development, The Ombudsman decided to look into this area as a matter of priority.

1.3 Accordingly, The Ombudsman declared on 19 April a direct investigation, under section 7(1)(a)(ii) of The Ombudsman Ordinance, Cap 397, into examination arrangements for students with SpLD. The then Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower and the Secretary General of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") were informed on 3 April, 2007.

WHAT IS SpLD?

1.4 To recapitulate our introduction in the Direct Investigation report

published on 19 April 2007 (**para. 1.1**), SpLD are a class of condition, occurring in a child of average or above average intelligence, characterised by a significant delay in one or more areas of learning. Despite adequate intelligence and education opportunities, children with SpLD often have problems with one or more of the basic processes used in understanding or using spoken or written language, such as:

(a) Listening
(b) Speaking
(c) Reading
(d) Writing
(e) Mathematical calculations

1.5 A more detailed description of the nature and types of SpLD, is at **Annex 1**. Problem in reading and writing is the most common type of SpLD encountered in this investigation.

AMBIT

1.6 This direct investigation examines the policy, requirements and administration of special arrangements for students with SpLD in internal and public examinations, focusing specifically on the following areas:

(a) special arrangements for internal examinations and assessments in primary and secondary schools for students with SpLD;
(b) the role of the then EMB (before 1 July 2007) and the Education Bureau ("EDB") (since 1 July 2007) in providing these special arrangements;
(c) special arrangements by HKEAA for public examinations for these students;
(d) coordination in connection with the provision of such arrangements –
    (i) among EDB, schools and HKEAA; and
    (ii) between Government and Non-Government organisations ("NGO");
(e) promotion of awareness of such special arrangements among parents, students, teachers and school authorities.

1.7 Our next direct investigation relating to SpLD will examine support services in general for these students.

METHODOLOGY

1.8 For this investigation, we examined the following documents and reference material:

(a) booklets and leaflets published by EDB for schools, including-
   (i) "Guidelines on Internal Assessment (2002)"
   (ii) "A Guide to Teaching: Understanding and Helping Students with Special Educational Needs (2001)" and
   (iii) "Principles and Strategies for Assessment for Students with Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools (2004)"

(b) HKEAA's guidelines and circulars for reference by schools and students-
   (i) "Guidelines on Special Examination Arrangements for Special Needs Candidates (Revised December 2006)"
   (ii) Circulars to Principals of Participating Schools entitled "Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs" and "Registration of School Candidates"

(c) EDB information on special examination arrangements and statistics on the distribution of SpLD students.

(d) HKEAA information on special examination arrangements and statistics on applications for such arrangements in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination ("HKCEE") and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination ("HKALE")

(e) HKEAA documents and files on selected applications for special examination arrangements which were initially not approved by its Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities ("the Task Group")

(f) Publicity and educational materials such as leaflets and pamphlets issued by EDB and HKEAA for public information.

1.9 We also consulted the following NGOs:

(a) The Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities ("HKALD")[1]; and

(b) Heep Hong Society[2].

1.10 From May to September, 2007, we interviewed:

(a) 13 parents, referred by the HKALD, who have children with SpLD. They have all consented to The Ombudsman disclosing, in anonymised form, their children's experience in accessing special arrangements in internal and public examinations;

(b) Principals, Vice Principals, teachers and social workers of six primary and nine secondary schools suggested by EDB, HKALD or selected by this Office as having a significant number of students with SpLD.

1.11 At the press conference on 19 April 2007 when this direct investigation was declared, The Ombudsman appealed for public comments and suggestions. Written submissions were received from HKALD, Caritas Society as well as a former teacher and a parent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.12 We thank the following for their support and views given in the course of our direct investigation:

(a) HKALD for information and views on the subject generally and for referring parents to us for interview;

(b) parents who agreed to be interviewed and consented to our disclosing, in anonymised form, their children's experience in applying for special arrangements in internal and public examinations;

(c) personnel (including principals, teachers, student counsellors and school social workers) of the 15 schools we visited;

(d) Heep Hong Society, Caritas Society and the parent and the

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[1] HKALD is a self-help NGO with close to 1,000 members

[2] Heep Hong Society is an NGO with the mission to provide early intervention for children with special needs

former teacher for their submissions in response to our public appeal.

INVESTIGATION REPORT

1.13 On 7 January 2008, we sent the draft report to the Permanent Secretary for Education and the Secretary General of the HKEAA for comments. These were received on 25 January 2008. The final report was issued on 11 February 2008.

2

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

2.1 Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Chapter 487) ("the Ordinance"), "disability" in relation to a person includes, among others, "a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction"[3]. The Disability Discrimination Ordinance Code of Practice on Education ("the Code") issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC")[4] states that "the provisions of the Ordinance apply to a wide range of persons, including those usually referred to as persons with specific learning disabilities"[5].

2.2 According to Section 6 of the Ordinance

"A person discriminates against another person in any circumstances relevant for the purposes of any provision of this Ordinance if –

(a) on the ground of that other person's disability he treats him less favourably than he treats or would treat a person without a disability;

(b) he applies to that other person a requirement or condition which he applies or would apply equally to a person without a

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[3] Section 2, Disability Discrimination Ordinance

[4] The EOC is the statutory authority on the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in Hong Kong

[5] Para. 4.12, Disability Discrimination Ordinance Code of Practice on Education, EOC, July 2001

disability but –

(i) which is such that the proportion of persons with a disability who can comply with it is considerably smaller than the proportion of persons without a disability who can comply with it;

(ii) which he cannot show to be justifiable irrespective of the disability or absence of the disability of the person to whom it is applied; and

(iii) which is to that person's detriment because he cannot comply with it; or

(c) on the ground of the disability of an associate of that other person he treats him less favourably than he treats or would treat a person without such a disability."

2.3 Section 24(2) of the Ordinance further stipulates that:

"Subject to subsections (3), (4) and (5), it is unlawful for an educational establishment to discriminate against a student with a disability –

(a) by denying that student's access, or limiting that student's access, to any benefit, service or facility provided by the educational establishment;

(b) by expelling that student; or

(c) by subjecting that student to any other detriment."

2.4 SpLD constitutes a disability that falls under the ambit of the Ordinance. Government and educational establishments are required to ensure equal opportunities for SpLD students in education, including examinations.

3

GOVERNMENT POLICY

INTEGRATED EDUCATION

3.1 EDB states that integrated education ("IE") with a whole-school approach is to provide equal learning opportunities for students with special educational needs ("SEN"), including students with SpLD who can benefit from education in ordinary schools. Under the Ordinance, ordinary schools should not refuse admission of students on grounds of their disability, which may include one or a combination of the following conditions:

(a) Hearing and visual impairment
(b) Speech and language impairment
(c) Physical disabilities
(d) Autistic spectrum disorders with average intelligence
(e) Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
(f) SpLD
(g) Mild intellectual disability

3.2 Schools are encouraged to develop an integrated education school policy covering early identification and intervention, monitoring of students' learning progress, assessment accommodation, curriculum differentiation and adaptation of teaching strategies, staff development and parental involvement. The ultimate goal is to enhance the capacity of schools and teachers in catering for student diversity.

FUNDING AND OTHER SUPPORT

3.3 EDB provides additional manpower or cash grants under a number of

schemes to help schools with SEN students.

Primary Schools

3.4 Primary schools with SEN students receive additional funding under the following programmes:

(a) ***IE Programme.*** Funding for an additional teacher is provided to schools with five or more SEN students. A teaching assistant will also be funded if the school admits eight or more SEN students.

(b) ***Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme ("IRTP").*** Funding for additional resource teachers and recurrent grants are given to facilitate schools to provide intensive remedial teaching in one or more of the three core subjects of English, Chinese and Mathematics.

(c) ***New Funding Mode ("NFM").*** Introduced in primary schools in the 2003/04 school year, NFM offers a per capita grant of $10,000 a year for each SEN student. A school with students with severe SEN is eligible for a per capita grant of $20,000 per year per student, up to a maximum of $550,000 a year. EDB's intention is to encourage primary schools currently in the IE and IRTP programmes to migrate to the NFM.

3.5 The number of primary schools receiving support under one or a combination of the above funding modes is tabulated below:

Funding	No. of Schools	
	2006/07	2007/08
IE Programme only	3	3
IRTP only	219	188
NFM only	195	184
Mixed Mode (IRTP and NFM)	97	98
Mixed Mode (IE and IRTP)	41	36

Source: EDB statistics

Secondary Schools

3.6 Additional funding for secondary schools is provided as follows:

a) ***IE Programme.*** This is the same as that for primary schools (para. 3.4(a)).

b) ***School-Based Remedial Support Programme ("SBRSP") and Curriculum Tailoring Scheme.*** Additional teachers are provided to secondary schools with more academically low achievers. From the 2006/07 school year, however, these have been replaced, in phases, by the New Initiative to Cater for Academic Low Achievers at Junior Secondary Levels ("the New Initiative")

c) ***The New Initiative.*** Additional teachers are provided to secondary schools with academically low achievers. This programme was implemented at secondary 1 level in the 2006/07 school year and will be extended progressively up to secondary 3 in the 2008/09 school year.

3.7 The number of secondary schools receiving support under one or a combination of the above funding modes in 2006/07 is tabulated below:

Funding	No. of schools
Integrated Education (IE) Programme only	13
New Initiative	106
SBRSP and new Initiative	58
IE and New Initiative	9
IE, New Initiative and SBRSP	9

Source: EDB statistics

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS WITH SpLD

3.8 Based on statistics provided by EDB, the distribution of students with SpLD in primary and secondary schools during 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07 are:

Year	Primary	Secondary	Total
2003/04	1,195	165	1,360
2004/05	3,045	640	3,685
2005/06	5,534	1,096	6,630
2006/07 (as at 15.9.07)	6,110	2,760	8,870

Source: EDB statistics

3.9 A further breakdown of the number of students with SpLD in secondary schools by level is as follows:

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total
2004/05#	303	206	85	32	13	1	0	640[6]
2005/06#	511	293	193	68	30	1	0	1,096[7]
2006/07#	874	471	283	152	68	5	1	1,854[8]

as at 31 August of each school year

Source: EDB statistics

3.10 According to information supplied by EDB, in 2006/07, 88 secondary schools with SpLD students were not under any of the additional funding programmes (**paras. 3.6 and 3.7**) because they did not meet the eligibility criteria for any of these programmes. However, EDB states that these schools can make use of the recurrent and other grants to provide support for these students.

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[6] Number of schools where SpLD students are located = 240

[7] Number of schools where SpLD students are located = 286

[8] Number of schools where SpLD students are located = 318

4

INTERNAL AND PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

TYPES OF INTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

4.1 The number and format of internal examinations vary from school to school. Generally, schools hold four internal tests/examinations per school year. In addition, there are three other tests or assessments mandated by EDB:

a) ***Pre-Secondary 1 Hong Kong Attainment Test.*** Designed for Secondary 1 entrants, it is an instrument for measuring and monitoring the territory-wide standards of students in the three core subjects of Chinese, English and Mathematics. It also facilitates secondary schools in planning enhancement and support programmes for their Secondary 1 new entrants.

b) ***Primary 5 and 6 internal assessments.*** Students participating in Secondary Schools Places Allocation are subject to internal assessment on the basis of their performance in the second term of Primary 5 and the first and second terms of Primary 6. The assessment results determine students' banding for the purpose of Secondary Schools Places Allocation.

(c) ***Territory-wide System Assessment.*** Centrally developed and administered to students at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 for assessing their overall performance in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. Its objective is to inform

schools of their students' overall performances in the three subjects at the end of each Key Learning Stage for the purpose of enhancing learning and teaching.

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

4.2 There is no public examination at the primary level. There are, however, two public examinations for secondary school students, held usually in April and May respectively each year:

(a) the HKCEE for Secondary 5 students; and

(b) the HKALE for students who have completed a two-year Secondary 6 curriculum.

5

SPECIAL EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

BASIC PRINCIPLES

5.1 It is Government policy to provide special examination arrangements for students with SpLD as well as other SEN students. In the Code, such arrangements are considered reasonable accommodation[9] provided by schools and examination authorities for these students[10] under the Ordinance. They recognise that students with SpLD are likely to have difficulties in several areas, in particular reading accuracy, reading speed, spelling/dictation and handwriting speed/legibility.

5.2 Special examination arrangements are intended to "level the playing field" by removing the disadvantages brought about by the above difficulties but not central to the knowledge or skills being examined. They aim to enable candidates concerned to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge in the examination. However, there are a number of guiding principles:

(a) such arrangements should be provided on the basis of need;
(b) there should be no unfair advantage over other students; and
(c) they must not interfere with the assessment objectives.

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[9] Para. 12.2 of the Code explains the concept of "reasonable accommodation" and states " Educational establishments have the obligation to make reasonable accommodations in their existing programmes, services, facilities and benefits in order to meet the needs of their students, or prospective students with disabilities, unless such changes impose unjustifiable hardship." (para. 12.2.2)

[10] Para 17 of the Code explains the obligations of educational establishments in assessing students and states, "Educational establishments should ensure that their assessment mechanisms do not discriminate against students with disabilities." (para. 17.1)

INTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

EDB Guidelines

5.3 EDB regards special examination arrangements for internal tests and examinations as "part of the school-based support measures for students with SEN", including SpLD. Precise arrangements are made by schools based on the difficulties of the students, with reference to the guidelines issued by EDB and with advice from specialists such as educational psychologists.

5.4 EDB has issued the following guidelines:

(a) "A Guide to Teaching: Understanding and Helping Students with Special Educational Needs (2001)";
(b) "Guidelines on Internal Assessment (2002)"; and
(c) "Principles and Strategies for Assessment for Students with Special Educational Needs in Ordinary Schools (2004)".

5.5 Special examination arrangements for internal examinations vary greatly from school to school, and depend on the needs of the students concerned. They may include:

(a) extending examination time;
(b) enlarging the space in the answer sheet for students to write their answers;
(c) enlarging the font size of examination papers;
(d) reading out questions to students for non-language subjects;
(e) allowing use of a special room under separate invigilation;
(f) alternative method of answering (e.g. oral response, circling the answers)
(g) use of computer for word processing;
(h) supervised breaks.

EDB Support

5.6 For each student assessed to have SpLD, schools are advised to hold a case conference or a Student Support Team meeting involving educational psychologists or psychologist assistants, relevant teachers and parents to discuss specific support measures. These should include a learning support plan, teaching

adaptation and special examination arrangements.[11] EDB states that schools should be accountable for such arrangements. Parents can approach EDB for assistance if there is disagreement between them and the school.

5.7 From May to July 2005, the then EMB conducted a survey to review how special examination arrangements were provided in primary schools (**para. 5.5**). 78 teachers from 63 primary schools were interviewed. In the course of our investigation, EDB informed us that, since September 2006, its Special Education Support Officers have been visiting schools to review the school policy and the support measures, including special examination arrangements. Educational Psychologists also provide professional advice on special examination arrangements to school personnel. Feedback from different stakeholders are collected and addressed during such "consultation visits". As these are part of support services in general, they will be studied in our next phase of investigation (**para. 1.7**).

Assessment Tool

5.8 In the course of this investigation, EDB introduced the "Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students" ("HKT-JS") in the 2007/08 school year. EDB does not see the imminent need to develop a norm-referenced psychological assessment tool for senior secondary school level for the following reasons:

(a) Early identification and early intervention are its prevailing policy for supporting students with SEN. Based on EDB's data, the majority of SpLD students are identified and assessed during primary years.

(b) Since HKEAA accepts psychological assessment findings obtained within three years from the public examination, assessment for needs of special education arrangements can be conducted during the junior secondary school years.

(c) For students whose special needs emerge at the senior secondary level, the psychologists can make use of the psychological assessment tool for junior secondary students (Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties for Junior Secondary Schools Students with norms up to 15 years 6

[11] Practices vary from school to school. Some schools do not organise Student Support Teams at all (para. 6.15).

months), supplemented with the information collected from the newly developed teacher-administered Hong Kong Chinese Language Abilities Assessment, with local norms for S1, S3 and S5 students, to ascertain the need for special examination arrangements for these students.

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

Eligibility Criteria

5.9 Eligibility criteria are set out in the HKCEE and HKALE Regulations. In principle, ***bona fide*** Secondary 5 and 7 students of registered schools approved by HKEAA for participation may enter the respective public examination. Candidates have to submit applications through their schools, which will decide whether or not to present a particular student to sit for the public examination in question. If there is disagreement, the student may approach EDB for assistance.

Procedures for Application for Special Arrangements

5.10 Application procedures are set out in the Application Guide issued by HKEAA for information of candidates and schools. Procedures for processing individual applications are given in the Guidelines on Special Examination Arrangements for SEN Candidates[12] approved by the Public Examinations Board.

<u>Date for Submission</u>

5.11 School candidates with SpLD may submit their applications:

(a) in September/October of the Secondary 4 and 6 academic year ("early application"); or

(b) in September/October of the Secondary 5 and 7 academic year ("second phase application").

The "early application" option, introduced in April 2005 for the 2006 public examinations, was intended to enable schools to implement in internal examinations special arrangements which may be approved by HKEAA.

[12] A document for HKEAA staff's reference.

5.12 Based on the following HKEAA statistics, it can be seen that only a small number of candidates have benefited from this option:

Year	SpLD applications in HKCEE	Early applications in HKCEE	SpLD applications in HKALE	Early applications in HKALE
2006	25	9	1	1
2007	44	2	4	0

Source: HKEAA statistics

Documentary Requirements

5.13 For SpLD candidates applying for special arrangements in public examinations, HKEAA requires each application to be made by:

(a) completion of an application form (a copy of which is at **Annex 2**);

(b) submission of an assessment report, in a specified form (a copy of which is at **Annex 3**), duly signed by a qualified psychologist and the head of the school. This form provides information on the severity of the candidate's SpLD problem and indicates the extent to which the candidate is disadvantaged because of the disability. The candidate's needs must be supported by -

(i) records of the special examination arrangements provided by the candidate's school in internal examinations; and

(ii) an up-to-date psychological assessment report.

5.14 HKEAA made the following improvement measures in the course of our investigation:

(a) The Task Group at its meeting on 29 May 2007, clarified its requirement for "qualified psychologist" (**para. 5.13(b)**) to include "educational/clinical psychologist with professional practice training".

(b) The Task Group at the same meeting also refined the wording "up-to-date psychological assessment report" (**para. 5.13(b)(ii)**) to "psychological assessment report issued within three years

before the public examination".

(c) HKEAA revised the assessment report form (**para. 5.13(b)**) in September 2007. One of the major revisions is to make the psychologist's confirmation more specific:

Old Form	Revised Form
"I confirm that the diagnosis is still valid."	"I confirm that the candidate has specific learning disabilities in reading and writing (Dyslexia) and is in need of special examination arrangements in public examinations."

A copy of the old form is at **Annex 3** and the revised form at **Annex 4**.

(d) Meanwhile, HKEAA also clarified the requirements for the psychological assessment report (**para. 5.13(b)(ii)**) –

Old Requirements	Revised Requirements
(i) reading ability: accuracy and fluency of word reading and text reading (ii) writing ability: - free writing – organisation and quality - dictation - handwriting - error patterns - writing speed (iii) information on formal and informal assessment (iv) history of word learning difficulty (v) for candidates whose writing is difficult to read, work samples	(i) clinical interview record (ii) assessment results and analysis (assessment tools with Hong Kong norms preferred): - intellectual functioning - literacy skills, e.g. word reading, word dictation, reading comprehension, etc. - cognitive processes related to reading and writing, e.g. rapid naming, orthographic knowledge, etc. (iii) conclusion on whether the candidate is a case of dyslexia and recommendations on needs and possible types of special examination arrangements

Processing of Applications

5.15 Applications are normally processed in three sequential stages:

(a) the HKEAA Secretariat;

(b) one of the two Vetting Teams; and

(c) the Task Group

5.16 Requests for review of the decisions of the Task Group are considered by an Appeal Panel for Special Needs Candidates ("the Appeal Panel").

5.17 The respective membership of the Task Group and the Appeal Panel is at **Annex 5.** Members of the two Vetting Teams are drawn from the Task Group.

5.18 Applications are processed as follows:

(a) HKEAA Secretariat staff first screens each application for completeness of information and supporting documents. In case of missing or conflicting information, they will contact the school, the candidate, the educational or clinical psychologist.

(b) Except for straightforward cases (such as those seeking very standard special arrangement), all applicants were required to attend an interview at the HKEAA. From September 2007, special choice forms are issued to candidates to facilitate their indication of their requirements of special examination arrangements.

(c) When the necessary information is ready, the application is presented to a Vetting Team for consideration in the form of a case summary. Having considered whether the psychological assessment report can facilitate a firm diagnosis of SpLD and whether the special arrangements requested are reasonable, the Vetting Team makes its own recommendations.

(d) The application, together with the Vetting Team's recommendations, is submitted to the Task Group for endorsement, if the case is straightforward, or further consideration, if it has complication. The Task Group's decision (approval or rejection) is communicated, by notification letter sent by post, to the candidate's school in **February** of the year following the submission of application (i.e. in the previous **September/October**)(**para. 5.11**). From 2007, notification letters are also copied to the candidates.

5.19 Candidates not satisfied with the outcome of their application may request in writing for review within one week from the date of the notification letter, giving reasons and supporting documents. Such requests are considered by the

Appeal Panel, whose decisions are final. Decisions are conveyed by letter to the candidates, before the start of the HKCEE/HKALE.

Special Examination Arrangements Granted

5.20 Guidelines on special examination arrangements in HKCEE and HKALE are reviewed annually by the Task Group, endorsed by a Committee on Special Needs Candidates and approved by the Public Examinations Board. All applications are processed in accordance with the above guidelines. Exceptions or cases not covered by the guidelines are presented to the Public Examinations Board for special consideration and approval.

5.21 Special examination arrangements that may be granted depend on the nature and severity of their condition, history of special provisions in schools and the schools' recommendations. These may include:

(a) allowance of 25% extra time for written papers and 15% for multiple-choice papers. Longer time may be allowed in exceptional cases with justification;

(b) special arrangements such as using only one side of an answer book, writing on alternate lines or circling multiple-choice answers on a question paper instead of filling in boxes on an answer sheet, or special answer sheets with wider spacing;

(c) printing question papers in special format, e.g. one-side printing or enlarged fonts;

(d) specially arranged centre (e.g. in a classroom instead of a hall);

(e) special seating in a centre (e.g. near the front or back of an examination centre);

(f) supervised breaks in examinations lasting 90 minutes or more (a five-minute break will normally be given for every 45 minutes of examination, but additional breaks may be permitted in exceptional cases with justification);

(g) other special arrangements such as use of computer in answering questions may be considered on an individual basis, "provided that sufficient evidence to support an applicant's request is submitted and the requested arrangements are practicable in a public examination setting without any undue

advantage over other candidates"[13].

Number of SpLD Applications

5.22 Statistics on SpLD students who applied for special examination arrangements in HKCEE and HKALE from 2003 to 2007, as provided by HKEAA, are set out below.

<u>HKCEE</u>

Examination Year	Applications Received	Applications Approved	No. rejected	Appeal Cases	
				Approved	Rejected
2003	1	0	1	-	-
2004	8	8	0	-	-
2005	12	12	0	-	-
2006	28	28*	1#	1	0
2007	48	46**	3##	3	0

* Of which 3 cases were treated as physical/other disabilities

** Of which 4 cases were treated as physical/other disabilities

One candidate whose application was treated as a case of physical disability by the Task Group was dissatisfied with the decision.

One candidate was dissatisfied with the refusal of the request for the use of a particular computer software, although her request for other special arrangements was approved.

Source: HKEAA statistics

<u>HKALE</u>

School Year	Applications Received	Applications Approved	No. Rejected
2003	0	0	0.
2004	0	0	0
2005	2	1	1*
2006	1	1	0
2007	4	4	0

* No appeal was received from the rejected case.

Source: HKEAA statistics

It is evident that in the past five years (2003 – 2007):

[13] HKEAA's Guidelines on special examination arrangements for Special Needs Candidates (Revised December 2006)

(a) there has been a significant increase in the number of applications for special examination arrangements in both HKCEE and HKALE;

(b) over 90 per cent of applications relating to HKCEE were approved by the Task Group; and the rejected applications were eventually approved upon appeal.

COORDINATION AMONG EDB, HKEAA, PARENTS AND NGOs

EDB and other stakeholders

5.23 EDB has issued "A Guide to Teaching: Understanding and Helping Students with Special Educational Needs" (2001) as well as the leaflet on "Principles and Strategies for Assessment" (2004) on special arrangements in internal examinations to schools and posted them on its website. Advice on how to provide special examination arrangements is given in the resource material "Fun with Reading and Writing: a resource package on helping students with SpLD" which was disseminated to all schools in 2002.

5.24 In addition to various school-based talks and presentations, the then EMB organised 10 district-based teacher workshops in October 2004, in which teachers were trained to conduct early identification and intervention programme as well as to provide homework and assessment accommodations for students with special needs. This was augmented by briefing sessions by the then EMB for principals and teachers in October 2005.[14] Its officials participated as speakers in two briefing sessions organised by HKEAA in January and October 2006 for parents of students with SpLD. EDB also provides officers as speakers in relevant seminars organised by NGOs.

5.25 Since September 2007, EDB has reorganised its teacher training programme on SpLD to include 90-hour advanced and 60-hour thematic courses under the 5-year professional development framework on Integrated Education. All the courses would be conducted in a full-time block-release mode. Regular teachers

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[14] This Office informed the then EMB of our intention to initiate a direct investigation into assessment of children with SpLD in April 2005 and declared such investigation on 1 September 2005.

of Government, aided primary, secondary and special schools will be granted paid study leave for attending these courses, and supply teachers will be provided to schools accordingly. These courses emphasise the provision of appropriate accommodation, including special examination arrangements for SpLD students. Under the topic of accommodation, tutors have to cover concerns such as strategies, knowledge, government policy and other up-to-date information.

HKEAA and other stakeholders

5.26 The Task Group (**para. 5.17**) responsible for considering applications has two educational psychologists from EDB on its membership. A senior EDB official also sits on the Appeal Panel.

5.27 Apart from issuing guidelines which are posted on its website for general viewing and downloading, HKEAA disseminates this information via seminars as well as information leaflets and the parents group. It held three seminars for the 2006 HKCEE/HKALE, one for the 2007 examinations. Four seminars were conducted for the 2008 examinations: one for schools; one for educational/clinical psychologists; and two for parents.

5.28 In addition, HKEAA meets with the chairperson and the staff members of HKALD annually to discuss matters of concern: e.g. clarifying finer details of the procedures for application, the format of the current special examination arrangements and problems encountered by individual candidates.

6

FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS

INTERVIEWS

6.1 To obtain feedback on special examination arrangements in internal and public examinations are implemented, we have interviewed:

(a) the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Council Members of HKALD;
(b) 13 parents who have children with SpLD and have had experience in applying for special arrangements in internal or public examinations, or both;
(c) principals, teachers and social workers from six primary and nine secondary schools, in different geographical areas which have students with SpLD.

CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS

6.2 During our interviews with the personnel of the 15 schools (**para. 1.10(b)**), they have identified the following as their main challenges in providing special examination arrangements.

Lack of Adequate Professional Knowledge

6.3 Many teachers did not have professional knowledge to decide what

arrangements should be made for SpLD students. They considered EDB's guidelines too generic and advice from educational psychologists not clear or detailed enough to help them on the ground.

6.4 The fact that many SpLD students had other disabilities such as attention deficit, hyperactive or autistic syndromes aggravated the difficulties and their management. Since schools were not required to report to EDB on arrangements provided for their students, they designed their own "special arrangements". Practices and decisions on what concessions to be granted, therefore, varied greatly from school to school.

Extra Work

6.5 Special examination arrangements had to be customised to the needs of individual students. This inevitably entailed additional work for teachers and school administrators, often already quite heavily committed.

6.6 Some interviewees considered that the training programmes organised by EDB on how to teach SpLD students did not contain adequate instructions on the type of special examination arrangements for individual students. Many of EDB's training programmes were held during weekdays, mostly afternoons. Teachers had less incentive to go if no supply teachers were provided. For those courses held in the evening or on weekends, some teachers found it hard to fit them into their already packed schedules.

"Integration" of Students

6.7 A few primary and secondary school administrators expressed reservations about the "integrated education" policy. While the intention of promoting student diversity by integrating SEN students with ordinary students was commendable, there were adverse educational effects. First and foremost was the burden on teachers and school administrators, particularly in schools with a relatively high proportion of SEN students with different disabilities. Secondly, some SEN students perceived themselves as inferior to ordinary students and were anxious not to ask for anything which would "expose" their handicap/inferiority, for example by requesting special examination arrangements.

6.8 Some school administrators suggested a specialised allocation system

whereby a school would need to deal with only one particular type of SEN students. This would ease the burden and give teachers and administrators an opportunity to focus on and build up expertise in a particular type of SEN.

Lack of Assessment Tool

6.9 There was no assessment tool for SpLD students at secondary level prior to 2007/08 school year.

Parental Reluctance

6.10 Upon their children entering secondary schools, some parents of SpLD students were reluctant to disclose their children's condition for fear of discrimination. Except for those with experience in this area, teachers were generally not aware of these "hidden SpLD students" and were hence oblivious to the need to offer any special examination arrangements in internal examinations.

Insufficient Funding

6.11 Some secondary school principals and teachers found it difficult, in the absence of additional funding and other resources, to provide special examination arrangements for SpLD students.

STUDENT'S RIGHT TO TAKE PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

6.12 Parents of a few SpLD children alleged that their school had refused to submit their children's applications to take the HKCEE. The school administration justified this on the ground that the students would do better to pursue other career-related programme of study.

FEEDBACK FROM NGOs

6.13 NGOs reflected some parents' views as follows:

(a) Some secondary school teachers did not have adequate knowledge of SpLD. The options for special examination

arrangements provided by some schools tended to be standardised and limited. They were not fine-tuned to meet the special needs of some students, e.g. weakness in vocabulary retrieval.

(b) Support for SpLD students in Direct Subsidy Schools was lacking.

(c) Some schools did not provide special arrangements because the number of SpLD students was considered too small; or in some cases, the school concerned was at a loss as to how special examination arrangements should be implemented.

(d) Some parents alleged that their children's schools refused parents' participation in the Student Support Teams; and some did not organise Student Support Teams at all. They suspected that funding provided by EDB was diverted by some schools to other purposes.

OUR OBSERVATIONS

6.14 The parents, NGOs and school personnel interviewed were not selected through a structured sampling method. The views collated above cannot be taken as statistically representative. Their allegations have yet to be verified or substantiated with evidence. However, it does illustrate their sentiment and lack of faith in the current state of affairs. Furthermore, these allegations have highlighted a number of issues that warrant further study and examination in our next phase of investigation (**para. 1.7**).

7

CASE STUDIES

PREAMBLE

7.1 HKEAA handled 97 applications for special arrangements in HKCEE and 7 applications in HKALE from 2003 to 2007 (**para. 5.22**). A total of six applications were rejected[15] partly or wholly by the Task Group. Four of these rejected cases subsequently went on to appeal; whereas the remaining two did not appeal.

7.2 We have studied five applications: four that went on to appeal; and one that was approved by the Task Group. Selection of these cases is not statistically representative. The intention of studying these cases is to identify areas for improvement in the procedural and administrative aspects.

7.3 Due to privacy considerations, these case studies are anonymised, but all details are facts extracted from HKEAA files for Cases A, B, C and D. Details of Case E were provided by the student's mother. The parents of all five students consented to the anonymised publication of their children's case details.

Case A (2006 HKCEE Candidate)

Case History

7.4 Student A had experienced learning difficulties since primary school. Although he had high IQ score of 119 ± 4, his academic performance was unsatisfactory despite his efforts and intensive coaching by his mother. At age 9 in

15 One application as SpLD was approved as a case of physical disabilities but the applicant was dissatisfied with the decision (para. 5.22).

1998, his physician referred him to the DH Child Assessment Service ("CAS") for evaluation in respect of learning difficulties, especially in writing.

7.5 Student A was given an assessment, follow-up review and support sessions at CAS. In September 2001 (after nearly 3 years), he was assessed by CAS to have weaknesses in postural control and balance, bilateral coordination, visual-motor integration and handwriting control; and mild to moderate weaknesses in reading and dictation/spelling tasks. His reading and writing impairment was diagnosed as developmental in nature. CAS recommended that his school should allow Student A to type in English and Chinese, reduce his copying work during class and give him additional time for tests and examinations.

7.6 Student A was given, from Secondary 2, special examination arrangements by his school which included 20% extra time and lower mark deduction for mistakes. His examination scores improved as he was able to complete the examination papers with the additional time given. On 22 June 2005 Student A submitted an application to HKEAA for special arrangements in the 2006 HKCEE, requesting extra time, rest intervals and more lenient marking for spelling errors. His school confirmed that his reading accuracy was below average, that his reading speed, handwriting legibility and handwriting speed were grossly below average and that he had been given special arrangements in internal examinations since Secondary 2. In addition, the school provided a detailed analysis of his difficulties, namely: slowness in reading and writing and illegible writing, serious tendency to misspell and misrepresent words.

7.7 Student A further provided a progress report from an educational psychologist of the then EMB dated 1 September 2005, confirming that he still suffered from slow writing speed and recommending that special arrangements in school examinations, namely, 20% extra time for conventional papers for all subjects and 10% more for multiple-choice papers as well as supervised breaks, should continue. The report also recommended that the school should help Student A to apply for similar arrangements in HKCEE.

7.8 The Task Group met on 30 November 2005 and decided that the documents submitted indicated that the candidate had developmental coordination disorder and the psychological assessment report did not provide sufficient information to substantiate the diagnosis of SpLD. It was agreed that the case be treated as a case of physical disabilities subject to the agreement of the educational

psychologist, and the extra time allowance given to the candidate should be based on the speed test results. The psychologist, when contacted by HKEAA after the meeting, indicated no objection to treating the case as one of physical disabilities and to giving extra time allowance to the candidate according to the speed test results.

7.9 HKEAA issued a letter to inform the school on 28 December 2005 of the above decision, namely: Student A would be given special arrangements applicable to candidates with physical disabilities which, in this case, was given less extra time allowance than that for candidates with SpLD[16]. Student A was allowed to appeal by 10 January 2006.

7.10 This decision was relayed by the school to Student A but did not reach him until mid-January 2006, after the period for appeal.

7.11 Student A's mother wrote to HKEAA on 6 February 2006 to query the decision, enclosing testimonies from two of his teachers confirming that Student A had SpLD.

7.12 HKEAA wrote to the mother on 17 February 2006 to suggest that she provide further psychological assessment by the end of February 2006 to substantiate the claim of SpLD.

7.13 On 13 March 2006, Student A submitted an up-to-date, detailed seven-page assessment report from a private educational psychology services provider, which confirmed that Student A's academic deficits in both reading and writing were not "attributed primarily to mitigating or exclusionary factors such as sensory impairment, emotional disturbance, inadequate schooling or instruction, limited familiarity with the English language, low motivation or energy", that Student A "met the criteria for the diagnosis of Reading Disorder and Writing Disorder", and that "accessing and implementing relaxed time limits for written examinations should be granted".

7.14 The Appeal Panel met on 17 March 2006 and decided to treat the case as one of SpLD and give Student A standard special arrangements for SpLD. This decision was conveyed to Student A on 29 March 2006 and the details of the

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[16] The extra time allowance given to Student A as:

a) a physically disabled candidate was 10-15% for English Language, 20% for Chinese Language, 15-20% for Mathematics, 10-20% for Physics, Economics and Chemistry, and 20% for Biology;

b) a SpLD candidate was 20-25% for English Language, 25% for Chinese Language, 15-25% for Mathematics, 15-25% for Physics, Economics, Chemistry and Biology.

arrangements notified on 4 April 2006.

7.15 Subsequently, Student A scored 14 in the 2006 HKCEE. Although his former school had reserved a place for him in Secondary 6, he decided to continue his studies overseas which offer a better learning environment for SpLD students.

Issues Revealed

7.16 This case revealed the following issues:

(a) ***Tardiness in conveying decisions.*** The HKEAA Secretariat had taken an inordinately long time to issue letters on the Task Group's decision (one month) and the Appeal Panel's decision (12 days).

(b) ***Unreasonable time allowed for appeals.*** Student A was given only 13 days, during a festive holiday season, to appeal.

(c) ***Different opinions on diagnosis.*** Student A's application was supported by his school and with the assessments of a DH pediatrician and an educational psychologist of the then EMB. He had been given special arrangements in internal examinations since Secondary 2. The Task Group rejected the application initially because a confirmed diagnosis of SpLD had not yet been established. This case illustrates the plight of the candidate and his mother in face of different opinions on diagnosis.

Case B (2007 HKCEE Candidate)
Case History

7.17 At age 11 in 2001, Student B was assessed by a clinical psychologist of Ha Kwai Chung Child Assessment Centre ("CAC"). The diagnosis was that he "showed a significant verbal performance discrepancy suggestive of SpLD". The clinical psychologist, therefore, recommended that his school should provide special arrangements such as extra time, writing on alternate lines and circling answers for multiple-choice questions. However, the school did not provide any such arrangements for Student B in internal examinations.

7.18 Student B attended another assessment by an EMB educational psychologist on <u>11 October 2006, at age 16</u>. The psychologist's report included assessment data of the Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing (a test with the norm for children aged 10:1 - 10:6 of age), as well as assessment data of Tests of Reading and Writing Abilities for Secondary Students (Research Version, EMB, 2005) for which the norm is S2/S3 students. In the latter test, the candidate's performances varied, some better than and some below the mean. Using a test intended for children aged 10.5, the educational psychologist found that Student B "showed difficulties in Chinese dictation, Chinese writing, English copying and orthographic knowledge, with scores lying below the mean scores of younger peers (aged 10.1 - 10.6 years)". The educational psychologist recommended that Student B be given the following special arrangements: 25% extra testing time; 15% extra time for multiple-choice questions; special answer books to circle multiple-choice answers; writing on alternate lines in English papers; longer pauses for listening tests; and supervised breaks during examination.

7.19 <u>On 17 October 2006</u>, student B applied for special arrangements in the 2007 HKCEE, attaching the previous educational psychologist assessment reports and certification by his school that while he was above average in reading accuracy and reading speed, his handwriting legibility and handwriting speed were below average and that there was a significant discrepancy in his ability to express himself orally as compared to written expression.

7.20 The Task Group met on <u>26 January 2007</u> and decided to reject the case for being "marginal".

7.21 HKEAA notified the school of the rejection on <u>26 February 2007</u> on the ground that "the information provided could not lead to the conclusion of special learning disabilities". Student B was given until <u>7 March 2007</u> (seven working days) to appeal. Student B's mother wrote to HKEAA on the same day to protest and query the decision to reject Student B's application, which was supported by the then EMB's own educational psychologist. She also indicated that she would appeal against this decision.

7.22 Student B went for an assessment by a private psychologist on <u>13 March 2007</u>. This subsequent diagnosis confirmed that Student B's reading age, reading speed and writing speed were "far behind his chronological age peers by many years". Extra time allowance was recommended for him for all written papers

and English tests.

7.23 The school also provided additional assessment to confirm that Student B had been slow in reading in both Chinese and English, weak in recognizing and reproducing words, including simple words.

7.24 The Appeal Panel met on 19 March, 2007 and decided that standard special arrangements be given to Student B on the ground that:

(a) although the psychological reports could not lead to a firm conclusion of SpLD, they indicated that Student B needed special arrangements in HKCEE due to his difficulties with spelling, reading and writing; and

(b) benefit of doubt should be given to Student B as "there were discrepant opinions on diagnosis and standard assessment tools for SpLD were not available at the moment".

However, Student B would need to provide updated reports and sufficient evidence in future applications for special arrangements.

7.25 HKEAA notified Student B's mother of the Appeal Panel's decision on 29 March 2007.

7.26 When he attended the HKCEE for one of the subjects, he met with two mishaps. First, he was given wrong information about the examination centre he was to attend. Although the personnel in charge of that wrong centre took him to the correct centre by car, he was one hour late for the public examination. Secondly, the invigilator had difficulties in locating Student B's enlarged examination paper.

7.27 Student B scored 11 marks in the 2007 HKCEE.

Issues Revealed

7.28 The following issues were highlighted as follows:

(a) ***Appropriate tool?*** Assessment tool for children aged 10.5 had been used for a young person of 16 in this case. This raises significant concern about the appropriateness of the tool used.

(b) ***Different opinions on diagnosis.*** As the Appeal Panel stated that "there were discrepant opinions on diagnosis and standard assessment tools for SpLD were not available" **(para. 7.24(b))**, this case again illustrates the plight of the candidate and his mother in face of discrepant opinions on diagnosis among professionals.

(c) ***Tardiness in conveying decision.*** HKEAA took too long (one month) to convey the decision to Student B and gave too short a time (seven working days) for Student B to lodge an appeal.

(d) ***Deficiency in administration of examination arrangements.*** There was confusion and deficiency in the administration of examination arrangements. These incidents must have had adverse effects and put tremendous pressure on the candidate. This is most unfortunate and clearly unfair to Student B, further aggravating the handicap and difficulties he faced in sitting the HKCEE.

Case C (2007 HKCEE Candidate)
Case History

7.29 Student C was assessed, on 27 November 2003, at the age of 13 by a clinical psychologist of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the University of Hong Kong. His performance in reading Chinese was compared with the age norm of 12.6 and after his performance in subtests (rapid naming, phonological awareness, phonological memory and orthographic knowledge) was compared to the age norm of 10.5 or below. The assessment revealed "a great discrepancy among his very superior intellectual functioning, limited orthographic knowledge and slow rapid naming skills, indicating that he has features of SpLD in reading and writing". As a result, Student C had been provided with special arrangements by his school since Secondary 2.

7.30 On 23 October 2006, Student C (then aged 16) applied through his school for the following special arrangements at the 2007 HKCEE: extra time allowance, use of computer in English language writing, enlarged answer sheets,

writing on alternate lines and circling multiple-choice answers.

7.31 Student C was again assessed, at age 16.5 and then a Secondary 5 student, by the then EMB's educational psychologist on 16 November 2006. Reading and writing tests for secondary school students were administered to compare his performance to that of local Secondary 2 and 3 students. His achievement was found:

(a) comparable to the mean for Secondary 2 and 3 in reading speed, rapid digit naming and copying ability in Chinese language; and
(b) above the mean in Chinese writing ability and English copying ability.

The educational psychologist confirmed that speed of digit naming and Chinese words retrieval remained a relative weakness in Student C's performance. Additional time allowance in examinations was recommended for him.

7.32 The Task Group met on 26 January 2007 and considered the assessment results and the conclusion in the educational psychologist's report inconclusive. The education psychologist was contacted and she indicated that this was a marginal case of SpLD. The Task Group subsequently decided to reject application.

7.33 HKEAA wrote to the school on 26 February 2007 to say that since the information provided could not lead to the conclusion of SpLD, Student C's application was not accepted. Student C was given until 7 March (seven working days) to appeal.

7.34 Student C's mother and the school wrote on 5 and 6 March 2007 respectively to HKEAA to query the decision.

7.35 Student C's mother then approached the CAS of DH for help. CAS wrote on 5 March 2007 to certify that Student C was "a student with superior intellect and specific learning disabilities and dyslexia" and should be given time allowance, special answer formats/answer books and concessions on mark-deduction for spelling errors on non-language subjects".

7.36 Student C's school likewise sent a letter to HKEAA on 6 March 2007,

setting out in detail the nature of his learning difficulties. The school also confirmed that he had been given extra time allowance in all subjects of 20% in Secondary 2 and 3; and 25% in subsequent years. The Appeal Panel decided at its meeting on 19 March 2007 to accept Student C's application based on the same consideration as for Student B (**para. 7.24**). However, Student C was not allowed to use the computer in answering English Language 1B (Writing) examination because he did not meet the criteria for such request. In addition, Student C's application for special arrangements in future public examinations would be subject to updated reports and sufficient evidence.

7.37 HKEAA conveyed the above decision to Student C's mother on 29 March 2007.

7.38 Student C scored 20 in the 2007 HKCEE. He is continuing studies in the same school.

Issues Revealed

7.39 The following issues were revealed:

(a) ***Appropriate tool?*** When tested on 16 November 2006, Student C was a young person of 16.5 attending Secondary 5. His performance was being compared to that of students 3 years younger than him. Of the five areas tested, he was found to be above the mean in two areas and merely comparable to the mean in three. Even with the support of a clinical psychologist and his school which had granted examination concessions for the past 3 years, Student C's application was rejected for being only a "marginal" case of SpLD. This raises our concern as to whether administration of the test on 16 November 2006 was appropriate and interpretation of the results reasonable. It is particularly difficult to understand how such discrepancy in judgment could be justified among educators and specialists who are supposed to have the final say in ruling on such matters.

(b) ***Tardiness in conveying decision.*** HKEAA took one month to convey the Task Group's decision and gave seven working days for Student C to appeal.

Case D (Candidate at the 2007 HKCEE)
Case History

7.40 Student D was assessed at age 16 and as a Secondary 5 student, by an educational psychologist of an NGO (part of EDB's outsourced educational psychology service). Student D was diagnosed as having SpLD and attention difficulty. Although scoring "high average" in the Hong Kong Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (Short Form), her score in the Hong Kong Test of SpLD in Reading and Writing, when compared to the performance of children aged 12.5 (for Chinese word reading) and 10.5 (for rapid naming, phonological awareness, phonological memory and orthographic knowledge) respectively, was well below the norm of the respective age group. She also took twice the time to copy a Chinese passage. The diagnosis confirmed that she had SpLD in reading and writing.

7.41 On 28 January 2005, she undertook further tests at the Prince of Wales Hospital's Audiology Centre over her difficulty in speech comprehension in class. The doctor recommended that she should be given special arrangements.

7.42 Student D was given special arrangements in internal examinations in her school including extra time allowance and enlarged print.

7.43 When Student D sat for the HKCEE in 2005 and repeated in 2006, she was provided with special arrangements.

7.44 Student D applied to HKEAA on 13 October 2006 for special arrangements in the 2007 HKCEE, requesting extra time allowance, supervised breaks, enlarged examination papers, circling multiple-choice answers, use of the computer for Chinese character input and a particular computer software "聽寫王" to read out examination questions, as well as use of amplifier and speaker for listening test.

7.45 Her school provided an assessment which confirmed that she had been diagnosed as having SpLD and that her ability was below average in reading accuracy, reading speed, handwriting legibility and handwriting speed. There was also significant discrepancy between her oral expression and writing.

7.46 Student D was interviewed by HKEAA on 30 December 2006. She requested 50% more time for conventional papers and 25% for multiple-choice

papers, supervised breaks of five minutes for every 30 minutes and use of the particular computer software "聽寫王" for all subjects entered, including language subjects. She also indicated on the application form that use of transparency could be an alternative. Student D submitted, in support of her application, a letter from HA certifying that she had dyslexia as well as attention deficit disorder for which she was under medication.

7.47 The Task Group met on 26 January 2007 and decided to approve Student D's application except for the use of the particular computer software "聽寫王" as it would violate the assessment objective. However, no explanation was given as to how reading out the questions would violate the assessment objective of the subjects entered, including Mathematics and Principles of Accounts.

7.48 HKEAA wrote to her school on 2 March 2007 to convey the above decision and gave her until 7 March 2007 (three working days) to appeal.

7.49 Her school and the NGO's educational psychologist wrote to HKEAA on 15 March 2007 to reiterate their support for allowing Student D to use the particular computer software "聽寫王" in Mathematics and Principles of Accounts due to her visual impairment with numerals. Moreover, Student D had been using this software in internal examinations.

7.50 On 19 March 2007, the Appeal Panel decided to uphold the Task Group's decision in rejecting the request to use the computer software because it would "violate the assessment objectives".

7.51 The above decision was conveyed to the school on 29 March 2007.

7.52 Student D scored 11 marks in the HKEAA. She alleged that because of HKEAA not allowing her to use the computer software, she had failed in Mathematics and was able to handle only the textual part of the Principles of Accounts examination paper.

Issues Revealed

7.53 The issues revealed are as follows:

(a) ***Tardiness in conveying decisions.*** As in most cases studied, HKEAA took an unreasonably long time to convey decisions to Student D: one month to communicate the Task Group's decision, ten days to communicate the Appeal Panel decision. But Student D was given only three working days to lodge her appeal.

(b) ***Lack of Transparency.*** The application was rejected on the ground that it would "violate the assessment objective". In line with an open and transparent administration, HKEAA has an obligation to explain to the parties concerned how reading out questions would "violate the assessment objective" of a Mathematics or Principles of Account examination.

Case E (2006 HKCEE Candidate)
Case History

7.54 Student E was diagnosed as having SpLD by a CAC in 1998, at age 7. His mother informed his school of this, but the school claimed that there was nothing wrong with him and refused to provide special arrangements for him. In the meantime, the CAC referred Student E to the Educational Psychology Service of the then Education Department, which provided him with remedial training from 1998 to 2000.

7.55 When Student E moved on to secondary school, his mother likewise told the school of his condition and urged the school administration to get the CAC report from the primary school. The school administration did as requested, but decided that there was no problem. At the mother's persistent urging, the school sent Student E to an outsourced educational psychologist for assessment in 2003, 2005 and 2006. All three assessments concluded that Student E was average, adequate or just "one year backward". It should be noted that in 2006, Student E was assessed with a tool intended for children six years younger, which found him to be "average" or "above mean" in various areas. The educational psychologist concluded that Student E was not handicapped by dyslexia or SpLD and did not recommend any special arrangements for him in school or public examinations.

7.56. Notwithstanding this diagnosis, the school administration agreed to give Student E six additional minutes at school examinations.

7.57 In October, 2006, Student E tried to apply for special arrangements in the 2007 HKCEE. However, the school administration did not support his application and stated clearly in the accompanying Assessment Report that Student E had been assessed in 2003, 2005 and 2006 by an educational psychologist who decided that Student E did not need special arrangements.

7.58 Frustrated and worried about her son's performance at the HKCEE, Student E's mother took her son back to the CAC which had referred him to a private assessment centre. This had certified him as a clear case of "learning disorder not otherwise specified" and recommended that he be given additional time of at least 50% at examinations.

7.59 When Student E's application for special arrangements at the 2007 HKCEE was considered by the Task Group, the discrepancy in diagnosis by the school Educational Psychologist and the private assessment centre was noted. As HKT-JS (**para. 5.8**) was by then ready for print, the Task Group suggested to seek permission from the Hong Kong SpLD Research Team to use the test and asking one of the members of the Task Group, an EDB educational psychologist who was also a member of the Hong Kong SpLD Research Team, to administer the test for the student. As Student E met the diagnostic criteria of SpLD on the HKT-JS, his application for special examination arrangements was subsequently approved.

7.60 Student E scored 8 marks in the 2007 HKCEE.

Issues Revealed

7.61 This case reveals three areas for serious concern:

(a) ***Lack of knowledge and understanding of SpLD.*** This case demonstrated the lack of knowledge as well as understanding of the nature of SpLD among school personnel, to the extent that they simply ignored the CAC assessment report.

(b) ***Appropriate tool?*** Student E was assessed with a tool intended for much younger children, on which basis he was denied assistance in overcoming his learning difficulties.

(c) ***Divergent views.*** This is a good example of how two educational psychologists would reach totally different diagnosis.

8

OBSERVATIONS AND OPINIONS

PREAMBLE

8.1 Since we notified EDB and HKEAA of our intention to initiate this direct investigation in April 2007, they have introduced a number of improvements to fine-tune the procedures and stepped up liaison with NGOs. Such action is clearly positive and commendable.

HKEAA Improvement Measures

8.2 HKEAA has clarified its requirements for "qualified psychologist" (**para. 5.14(a)**); an "up-to-date" report (**para. 5.14(b)**); and the contents of the psychological assessment report (**para. 5.14(d)**). It also revised the assessment report form to make the psychologist's confirmation more specific (**para. 5.14(c)**).

EDB Improvement Measures

8.3 There used to be no assessment tool for SpLD students at secondary level (**para. 6.9**). EDB introduced the HKT-JS for secondary school students in the 2007/08 school year (**para. 5.8**). Furthermore, EDB has reorganised its teacher training programme on SpLD (**para. 5.25**).

STATISTICS OF SpLD STUDENTS

Increase in Number

8.4 EDB statistics show a dramatic increase of SpLD students since 2003/04 (**para. 3.8**) at both primary and secondary levels:

(a) primary schools: from 1,195 in 2003/04 to 6,110 in 2006/07 (up to 15.9.2007) i.e. an increase of 411%

(b) secondary schools: from 165 in 2003/04 to 2,760 in 2006/07 (up to 15.9.2007) i.e. an increase of 1573%.

8.5 Feedback from stakeholders shows that some parents of SpLD students did not inform the school administration of their children's condition for fear of stigma and discrimination (**para. 6.10**). It is, therefore, likely that the actual number of students with SpLD is higher than that reported to EDB. With better understanding of the condition, it is to be expected that the number of applications for special examination arrangements in the HKCEE and HKALE will increase significantly in future years. This will have implications for the workload of HKEAA in processing these cases.

Notable Diminishing Number of SpLD Students

8.6 Based on the statistics in para. 3.9, it can be seen that:

(a) in the same school year, there are fewer SpLD students in the senior levels;

(b) the number of SpLD students steadily decline as they progress through secondary education –

   (i) 303 SpLD students in Secondary 1 (2004/05) and only 283 (93%) of them progressed to Secondary 3 (in 2006/07)

   (ii) 206 SpLD students in Secondary 2 (2004/05) and only 152 (74%) of them progressed to Secondary 4 (in 2006/07)

   (iii) 85 SpLD students in Secondary 3 (2004/05) and only 68 (80%) of them progressed to Secondary 5 (in 2006/07)

   (iv) 32 SpLD students in Secondary 4 (2004/05) and only 5 (16%) of them progressed to Secondary 6 (in 2006/07)

   (v) 13 SpLD students in Secondary 5 (2004/05) and only one (8%) of them progressed to Secondary 7 (in 2006/07)

8.7 The drop in the number of SpLD students apparently making it to Secondary 6 and Secondary 7 is particularly significant. Very few seem to progress

beyond Secondary 5. We consider this an issue that warrants further study and will examine it more closely in the next phase of our direct investigation into support services for SpLD students (**para. 1.7**)

ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

8.8 Our case studies show that, prior to September 2007, HKCEE candidates had to be assessed by assessment tool for much younger children (**paras. 7.28, 7.39 and 7.61**). This raises the question whether the findings were accurate and fair in deciding on the provision or otherwise of special examination arrangements for secondary school students. With the recent introduction of the assessment tool for junior secondary students (**para. 5.8**), we hope the situation will be improved significantly. However, we consider it prudent for EDB to assess the effectiveness of the new tool and keep in view the need for further development of assessment tool for secondary school students.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS IN INTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

Monitoring Measures

8.9 While EDB issues guidelines to schools (**para. 5.4**) and conducts regular inspections and site visits (**para. 5.7**), actual implementation is left to the school administration. As a result, special examination arrangements are left to the discretion of school administration. Clearly depending on whether the school administration understands what SpLD is about and how receptive it is in meeting SpLD students' special educational needs, practices may vary significantly from school to school. To ensure that schools understand their obligation to provide special examination arrangements under the Ordinance (**para. 5.1**) and the practices among schools are consistent, we consider it necessary to establish some form of monitoring measures.

8.10 EDB's intention is that special examination arrangements should be discussed and decided among teachers, parents and educational psychologists in Student Support Teams or case conferences (**para. 5.6**). Feedback from different stakeholders is collected and addressed during the consultation visits (**para. 5.7**). While EDB continues with such practice, we shall look into the effectiveness of this arrangement in our next phase of investigation (**para. 1.7**).

Support for Schools

8.11 Case studies and feedback from NGOs, parents, and schools show that some schools are meticulous in taking care of SpLD students; some just do the minimum or simply turn a blind eye and deny that they have SpLD students. This could be due to lack of knowledge among some teachers (**para. 6.3**). The heavy caseload of educational psychologists, highlighted in our Direct Investigation on Assessment of Children with SpLD, may have also aggravated the already unsatisfactory situation.

8.12 Special examination arrangements entail extra work and additional resources for school administration. Currently, some schools receive additional funding and teaching resources to support SEN students, including those with SpLD (**paras. 3.4, 3.6 and 3.10**). School administration has the discretion as to how recurrent grants and additional resources provided by EDB should be deployed to cater for the needs of SpLD students. As provision of special examination arrangements is only part of the support services for those students in need, we shall look into the allegation of funds for SpLD students being diverted to other uses in our next phase of investigation (**para. 1.7**).

Review of Special Examination Arrangements

8.13 The then EMB surveyed the views of primary school personnel on special examination arrangements from May to July 2005 (**para. 5.7**). However, apart from this survey, there is no systematic review of special examination arrangements to ascertain

(a) whether and how they are implemented in schools;
(b) whether they are consistent among schools; and
(c) whether they are adequate for the needs of students.

8.14 As the survey was conducted in 2005 and did not cover secondary schools, another survey is due to cover both primary and secondary schools for feedback on the suitability of the different components of special examination arrangements in internal examinations.

Insufficient School Recognition of SpLD

8.15 Our interviews with school personnel and parents show that some schools have, through their diligent efforts and genuine caring for these students, built up quite a wealth of expertise in this area and are most supportive of the students both in providing special examination arrangements in internal examinations and seeking special examination arrangements in public examinations. We commend these educational professionals on their dedication.

8.16 On the other hand, there are schools where the teachers and staff are ignorant of SpLD and insensitive to the needs of SpLD students, sometimes to the point of being callous. In one school visited by us, no special examination arrangements are provided even though several students are confirmed to have SpLD. The school in question does not even consider it necessary to discuss this matter with the students concerned or their parents. This is unfortunate. In the next phase of study (**para. 1.7**), we will examine the level of knowledge and understanding among school personnel of the problem faced by SpLD students; the school's responsibilities in providing support for those students; and how the support service should be delivered.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS IN PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

Tardiness in Conveying Task Group Decisions

8.17 Case studies show that HKEAA Secretariat staff took a long time to dispatch notification of the Task Group's decisions. For the four applications (Cases A-D) studied in Chapter 7, the time lapse between the date of the Task Group's meetings and that of the letters to the schools ranges from 28 to 35 days. The notification in Cases B and C was issued in late February; and that in Case D in early March. Although the "Guidelines on Special Examination Arrangements for SEN Candidates" provide that the notification is issued in February (**para. 5.18(d)**), we consider that the time gap between the Task Group's decision and the notification should be shortened to allow more time for the applicant to prepare for appeal. This is particularly necessary since the public examinations take place in April and May (**para. 4.2**).

8.18 HKEAA explained that it processes the applications for special examination arrangements from all categories of SEN candidates in one go. This is

to ensure that all applications are handled in a consistent manner and to avoid the feeling of uncertainty if notifications to applications are issued at different times. The results of all applications (a total of 650 cases in 2006-07) are released to the schools and candidates in February after the Task Group (for SpLD cases) and the Committee on Special Needs Candidates (for all other non-SpLD cases) have made a decision on the cases. In view of the varying needs of individual candidates, the notification letters include detailed information with personalised special examination arrangements and individualised timetables for the subjects concerned.

8.19 We note HKEAA's rationale for processing all applications "in one go". In our view, there are basically four different outcomes for SpLD applicants (para. 5.22):

(a) approval is given for special examination arrangements as requested;
(b) approval is for physical disabilities instead of SpLD;
(c) only partial approval is given; and
(d) all arrangements requested are rejected.

We see the scope, and the need, for different timing for processing – especially for informing - the above categories of applicants. There is a case for notifying applicants in categories (b), (c) and (d) first, to allow them more time to consider appeal and take further action to satisfy HKEAA's requirements. HKEAA can spell out the different timing in the Application Guide (**para. 5.10**), so that applicants are aware that approval letters would be issued later.

8.20 In fact, HKEAA has an option for "early application" to allow students to apply for special arrangements in Secondary 4 for HKCEE and in Secondary 6 for HKALE respectively (**para. 5.11**). This option should not only give ample time for HKEAA to process the applications, but also ease the stress on the students in knowing the outcome of their applications, and appealing as necessary, well before the examination. Meanwhile, the students can focus better on their studies without the burden of uncertainty over arrangements for the examination. This would also facilitate schools emulating the approved special arrangements, say, in mock examinations so that the students concerned can familiarise themselves with those arrangements. Regrettably, few students have been making use of this option (**para. 5.12**). HKEAA should, therefore, consider measures to make application in Secondary 4 for HKCEE and Secondary 6 for HKALE a normal and common practice. Measures may include, but are not limited to, re-naming "early application" and "second phase application".

Unreasonable Time Allowed for Appeals

8.21 Meanwhile, the time given for lodging an appeal is far too short. It is a time consuming process if further psychological assessment is sought for appeal. Officially, according to HKEAA guidelines, the deadline for appeal is one week. In the cases studied, the deadline ranges from five to 12 days. As the notification letter was sent through the post, the duration actually given was even shorter than that stated in the letter.

8.22 The notification used to be sent to the schools. As a result, the candidates were notified even later. We are glad that, since 2007, HKEAA has copied its letter to the candidates (**para. 5.18(d)**).

Lack of Transparency

8.23 We are concerned that HKEAA did not give reasons for its rejection of applications for special examination arrangements. Of the six rejected applications (**para. 5.22**), only one was given the reason for rejection. A sample of the rejection letter (without stating any reason) is attached at **Annex 6**. Although HKEAA's letter contains a contact person and telephone number for enquiries, we do not consider this sufficient to put the applicant in the picture. For the case in which HKEAA stated that the use of a computer software would "violate the assessment objectives", it did not elaborate on how reading out questions would violate the assessment objective of a Mathematics or Principles of Accounts examination (**para. 7.53**).

Different Opinions on Diagnosis

8.24 In three of the five cases that we studied, the Task Group rejected the applications despite support from the educational psychologists and the clinical psychologists. As the Appeal Panel stated in Case B, "there were discrepant opinions on diagnosis and standard assessment tools for SpLD were not available". With the introduction of the new assessment tool HKT-JS (**para. 5.8**) and improvement measures undertaken by HKEAA (**para. 5.14**), we hope that such discrepancies will be reduced to a minimum.

8.25 Sadly, students in need of special arrangements may not have such benefit in internal examinations. In this connection, we are delighted to note that, in

Case E, HKEAA commendably exercised discretion to organise a further assessment for the candidate and subsequently approved his application although no such arrangements had been provided in internal examinations. In these cases, HKEAA should continue to use its good sense and exercise discretion.

Need for Review of Criteria for Use of Computers

8.26 Cases C and D show that application of the existing criteria for use of computer or computer software (**para. 5.21(g)**) should need a review. In deciding whether use of computer should be permitted, views of the professionals (i.e. educational psychologist, doctors) consulted by the student concerned should be given weight in case of doubt.

8.27 We note that HKEAA has revised the Guidelines (**para. 5.10**) for the 2008 public examinations to allow the use of the computer under the following circumstances:

(a) a candidate whose handwriting is illegible (i.e. very difficult for the marker to decipher); or

(b) the candidate has motor or significant processing speed problems (i.e. extremely slow handwriting speed).

To compare with the previous requirements of "sufficient evidence to support an applicant's request...; and the requested arrangements are practicable in a public examination setting without any undue advantage over other candidates" (**para. 5.21(g)**), we consider the new requirements more specific but may fall into the danger of becoming too restrictive.

Composition of the Task Group

8.28 Our case studies show that apart from the students themselves, the people most concerned are the parents. As the Appeal Panel has been expanded to include a parent representative since 2007, it may be helpful to have parental representation on the Task Group as well.

Record Keeping

8.29 Our examination of the documents provided by HKEAA shows that,

except for one case, no detailed record is kept of the deliberations of the Task Group and the Appeal Panel to document why a decision was reached. We consider it necessary to keep an official record of such deliberations so that consistency may be maintained through building up precedents.

Administration of Examination Arrangements

8.30 Case B shows confusion and deficiency in the administration of examination arrangements (**para. 7.28**). HKEAA states that it has standing procedures to ensure that the correct special examination arrangements are in place for the candidates concerned. Although this may be an individual case, it has highlighted the importance of crosschecking that the correct arrangements are put in place. We consider it necessary for HKEAA to review the current arrangements.

PUBLIC AND PARENTAL AWARENESS

8.31 It is important that parents are aware that they can approach EDB for assistance if there is disagreement between them and the school over the provision of special examination arrangements for their SpLD children (**para. 5.6**). Although both EDB and HKEAA have uploaded the relevant information on websites (**paras. 5.23 and 5.27**), not all students and parents have ready access to the Internet. Furthermore, the contents of some of the websites concerned are aimed for professional teachers. It is not easy for layman to navigate. The assistance of parent-teacher associations and NGOs may be enlisted in dissemination of the information.

STUDENT'S RIGHT TO TAKE PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

8.32 We are concerned over the allegation of some parents of SpLD students that their school had refused to submit their children's applications to sit for HKCEE (**para. 6.12**). This is a serious allegation yet to be verified. We will look further into this topic in the next phase of our study on support services for SpLD students. Meanwhile, we would remind school administration and parents that students have a right to sit for public examinations; and they may approach EDB for assistance if they disagree with the refusal (**para. 5.9**).

9

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

"My childhood teachers made me feel small, made me feel like nothing... Though my sculptures are quite small, it's important for people to realize that I am life-size."

9.1 This is a quote from Willard Wigan, a celebrated miniature sculptor from England. He has learning disabilities, and does not know how to read or write. His childhood experience has inspired him to prove that "less is more", and that "nothing could be everything". We should take reference from this.

9.2 Our earlier direct investigation on assessment of children with SpLD shows that, just like other students, they can attain high academic achievements provided early assessment is made and suitable support is provided for them in learning and general guidance. It is important that they are given a fair opportunity to be educated and to develop their potential.

9.3 Examinations are an integral part of our education system and have significant impact on the future of young people, whether for further education or career development. It is essential, therefore, that special examination arrangements are available to SpLD children so that they will have a level playing field to develop and demonstrate their ability.

9.4 We recognise that there is increasing awareness of this need, and that both EDB and HKEAA have made efforts in the past few years to introduce and refine special examination arrangements for students with SpLD. However, there is considerable room for improvement in quite a number of areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9.5 In this context, the Ombudsman makes the following recommendations for EDB and HKEAA:

Special Arrangements in Internal Examinations (for EDB action)
Monitoring

(1) To remind school administration that special examination arrangements for students with SpLD in internal examinations are **a requirement under the Ordinance (para. 2.1) (paras. 8.9 – 8.10)**.

(2) To monitor suitably the implementation of special examination arrangements in internal examinations to ensure consistency across the school sector (**paras. 8.9 – 8.10**).

Support for Schools

(3) To continue providing support to schools in deciding on special examination arrangements, for example, by organising practical workshops and experience-sharing among schools and experts in this field (**para. 8.11**).

(4) To survey and assess the need for education psychology service and to plan for such provisions, reviewing critically the resources both in EDB and for outsourcing agencies, especially in helping schools to design and implement special examination arrangements for students with SpLD (**para. 8.11**).

Review of Special Examination Arrangements

(5) To conduct a survey in both primary and secondary schools for feedback on the suitability of the different components of special arrangements in internal examinations and how such arrangements are provided (**paras. 8.13 – 8.14**).

Special Arrangements in Public Examinations (for HKEAA action)
Time-frame

(6) To set an earlier target time-frame for informing candidates, as soon as possible, of the Task Group's decisions regarding their applications (**paras. 8.17 – 8.20**).

(7) To provide a more reasonable time-frame for appeals against rejection of applications (**paras. 8.21 – 8.22**).

(8) To consider measures to make the "early application" option (**para. 5.11**) a normal and common practice (**para. 8.20**).

Transparency

(9) In case of rejection, to give reasons to enable candidates to consider further action (**para. 8.23**).

Use of Computer

(10) To review, in consultation with the Task Group, application of the existing criteria for use of computer as part of the special examination arrangements, and to allow its use for other than motor problems as long as its use is supported by an educational psychologist and does not give the candidate unfair advantage over other candidates (**paras. 8.26 – 8.27**).

Composition of the Task Group

(11) To consider including a parent representative on the Task Group for a parental perspective and better understanding of the problems faced by students with SpLD (**para. 8.28**).

Record Keeping

(12) To document the deliberations, in addition to decisions, of the Task Group and the Appeal Panel (**para. 8.29**).

Administration of Examination Arrangements

(13) To review the standing procedures to ensure that the correct special arrangements are put in place (**para. 8.30**).

Briefings for Educational Psychologists (for HKEAA action)

(14) To arrange in-depth briefings for educational psychologists in EDB and for outsourcing agencies on HKEAA's requirements for:

(a) the details necessary in the assessment reports;

(b) how recommendations for special examination arrangements should be made in assessment reports accompanying the candidate's application; and

(c) the validity period of the educational psychologist's assessment (within three years of the date of the public examination) **(para. 8.24)**.

Public awareness (for EDB and HKEAA action)

(15) To promote awareness of parents and students that they can approach EDB for assistance if there is disagreement between them and the school **(paras. 8.31 and 8.32)**.

(16) To publicise the availability of special examination arrangements in internal as well as public examinations through easily accessible and comprehensible means, e.g. pamphlets **(para. 8.31)**.

(17) To step up liaison with the parent-teacher associations and NGOs to enlist their assistance for consultation and dissemination of information about special examination arrangements **(para. 8.31)**.

Assessment Tool for Secondary Schools (for EDB action)

(18) EDB to keep in view the need for further development of assessment tool for secondary school students **(para. 8.8)**;

Review of Resource Requirements (for HKEAA action)

(19) To review resource requirements in anticipation of increase in workload resulting from significant progressive increase in the

number of applications for special examination arrangements **(para. 8.5)**.

10

FINAL REMARKS

COMMENTS FROM EDB AND HKEAA

10.1 EDB and HKEAA have made detailed comments on our draft report. Those involving textual amendments have been duly incorporated in the report. Their representations and The Ombudsman's response are appended to this Chapter.

FINAL REMARKS

10.2 In sum, The Ombudsman maintains her stance in this report.

10.3 The Ombudsman realises that services for children with SpLD are relatively well developed in certain countries. However, public awareness about SpLD in Hong Kong, even among teachers and parents, is a phenomenon only in recent years. In these few years, Government has implemented a number of measures to cater for the needs of SpLD students. As we have identified areas for improvement, we sincerely hope that Government will further improve and refine its services for the disadvantaged students.

10.4 Finally, The Ombudsman thanks the Permanent Secretary for Education and the Secretary General of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and their staff for assistance throughout this investigation.

Office of The Ombudsman
Ref. OMB/DI/168
February 2008

I	Comments from EDB	The Ombudsman's Response
(a)	*Methodology of the Direct Investigation*	
	Notwithstanding the limitations are acknowledged in the report, EDB does not consider that it presents a fair and balanced picture in the report. The views provided by interviewees have not gone through a due triangulation process to cross-check the reliability and validity before some of them are generalised to formulate conclusions and recommendations. Quoting unverified views risks endorsing some factually or conceptually incorrect statements and may not be fair to the whole school sector and the parties involved.	We have made appropriate textual changes to the report. The views and comments from parents and school personnel were volunteered to us in confidence. In addition, privacy of the interviewees is also a concern. We have not, therefore, been able to go through a triangulation process. However, their information enables us to glean issues perceived from an insider's perspective. We have set out those issues in our report as a prelude to our next phase of investigation.

(b)	***The approach to promote inclusive education*** Support for students with SEN in ordinary schools, in particular for SpLD, is a relatively new development in Hong Kong that started only about a decade ago. Experience in western countries reveals that such development requires a fundamental paradigm shift in education which could take decades to grow and mature. Given that the Disability Discrimination Ordinance has already been in place, education and professional support for schools is the key to promoting inclusive practices in schools. It is more positive to facilitate schools to undergo a paradigm shift through encouragement and support.	We have made appropriate textual changes in the report. We do not intend to infringe upon the policy of school-based management. However, we consider that suitable monitoring mechanism should be put in place to ensure that practices among school are consistent and to review how good or bad they are doing. Bearing in mind examinations are an important part of the education system, the longer the students are denied of a level playing field to develop and demonstrate their ability, the more detriments they are susceptible to in both their current education and further education or career development.
(c)	***Autonomy and accountability of schools*** EDB provides schools with greater autonomy and flexibility in management and administration to cater for their individual needs,	

	and they have to be accountable for their performance and operation. While EDB has a regulatory role over schools, it is of the view that our recommendations on monitoring run contrary to the principle of autonomy and accountability.	
(d)	**Stress and workload for teachers** EDB has been endeavouring to address the concern of stress and workload of frontline teachers with a view to helping teachers better focus on teaching and improving the quality of education. Introducing any new control measures by EDB should be a conscious decision with strong justifications.	We are aware of the concern over stress and workload of frontline teachers. Our recommendations are aimed for improving the support for the disadvantaged students and not increasing unnecessary administrative work for teachers.
(e)	***Integration of Students*** Some school administrators' suggestion of a specialised allocation system whereby a school would need to deal with only one	There are merits in both inclusive education and specialised schooling. There exist divergent views on which approach is more

	particular type of SEN students is not feasible. Such system violates the principle of equal opportunity and this means that children will be deprived of the right to attend schools in the neighbourhood and parents will have restricted choice of schools. It is in breach of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance.	beneficial to students with special needs. We believe that what is of paramount importance is that each child should be assisted to develop to his or her full potential. That, too, must be the objective of any anti-discrimination legislation in respect of the disabled. In the interest of the SpLD students, this subject deserves public debate and discussions in the education sector.
(f)	***Direct Subsidy Schools*** Some school personnel's allegation that there was practically no support, educational psychologist or social work service for SpLD students in Direct Subsidy Schools ("DDS") is factually inaccurate. School social work service is provided to all students in secondary schools, including DDS, by the Social Welfare Department. EDB's subsidy to DSS is calculated in terms of the average unit cost of an aided primary/secondary place. Subsidies eligible to	We have made appropriate textual changes in the report. We shall look further into this issue in our next phase of investigation.

	aided schools will also be eligible to DDS. DDS are hence required to provide comprehensive services for students including the support for students with SEN. Moreover, they can utilise the DDS subsidy and fee income to enhance the support for needy students.	
(g)	***"Wastage" of SpLD Students*** It is conceptually incorrect to conclude the drop in number of SpLD students making it to senior secondary level as "wastage". Some students may have withdrawn from their studies, gone abroad for further studies, or taken other career-oriented course of study. In recent years, EDB has been advocating the creation of multiple exit pathways so that students can have the opportunity to realise their potentials by pursuing their interests and relative strengths. If a student does not pursue higher studies in an academic setting but	Appropriate textual changes have been made in report. We remain concerned over the notable drop in the number of SpLD students making it to senior secondary level and consider it an issue that warrants further examination in our next phase of investigation.

	chooses to take a vocational training course, such student should not be regarded as "wastage".	
(h)	***Lack of Monitoring*** Schools are accountable for providing special examination arrangements to their students. EDB has a monitoring mechanism in place for school performance. There are regular inspections and visits. Parents can approach the relevant School Development Officer of EDB for assistance should there be disagreement between the parents and the school. EDB also provides telephone numbers for the public to make enquiries on SpLD, which are already published in the leaflet on SpLD.	We consider that schools are accountable, to some extent, to EDB in provision of special examination arrangements to the students. It is, therefore, necessary to publicise to parents the current enquiry and consultation arrangements so that they may lodge complaints in case they are aggrieved by the schools' arrangements.

II	Comments from HKEAA	The Ombudsman's Response
(a)	***Case Studies*** The selected case studies present a one-sided picture rather than a balanced view on the special examination arrangements HKEAA has been providing through on-going improvement of its service.	As we have already pointed out in the report, selection of these cases is not statistically representative. The intention of studying these cases is to identify areas for improvement in the procedural and administrative aspects.
(b)	***Task Group*** In considering individual applications, the Task Group has focussed on whether the information or assessment data in the documents submitted can lead to a confirmed diagnosis of SpLD. According to expert advice from the psychology field, there are always cases of candidates with some degree of reading or writing difficulties but have not been diagnosed as confirmed cases of SpLD. The Task Group is cautious not to bring about "unfairness" to other candidates by giving special examination arrangements to marginal cases.	We appreciate the fact that there are always differences in opinions on diagnosis among professionals. With the introduction of the assessment tool for junior secondary school students, we hope that processing of applications for special examination arrangements would be streamlined. We have also to consider the difficulties encountered by the parents and students who are laymen and do not understand the complexities of psychological assessments. It is, therefore, important to put them in the picture of what are required to satisfy the requirements for obtaining special examination arrangements in public examinations. For this, we have already made a recommendation to improve transparency in the processing of
(c)	***Assessment Tool*** The case studies have highlighted the difficulties in assessing candidates' special needs for special examination arrangements	

	without a local standardised assessment tool and consistent criteria assessment of SpLD among psychologists.	applications.

ANNEXES

Annex 1
(Para. 1.5)

Some Types of SpLD

(a) Dyslexia, a problem in reading and writing caused by difficulty in seeing the difference between letter or character shapes.

(b) Mathematics disorder whereby the individual has significant difficulties with concepts of number, quantities and computation not explained by general intellectual cognitive difficulties such as mental delay.

(c) Specific language impairment whereby the individual exhibits linguistic deficits affecting different aspects of linguistic performance, such as phonology (speech sounds), semantics (meaning), grammar and so on.

(d) Dyspraxia (developmental co-ordination disorder) whereby the individual has difficulties in gross and fine motor execution, in postural control and balance, and is often described as "clumsy".

(e) Visual spatial organization and perceptual disorders whereby the individual has difficulties in understanding spatial relations, left/right concepts, and in perceptual organization of nonverbal output (including for drawing and handwriting).

(f) Central auditory processing disorder whereby the individual has difficulties in processing and remembering language-related tasks.

Annex 2
(para. 5.13(a))

S

考生報名表格編號
(由考評局填寫)
Entry Form Ref. No.
(to be entered by the HKEAA):

CE

香港考試及評核局
HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY
2007年香港中學會考
HONG KONG CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION EXAMINATION 2007
特殊需要考生－特別考試安排申請表格（學校考生）
Special Needs Candidate – Application For Special Examination Arrangements (School Candidate)

注意事項
Notes:

(1) 填寫本申請表格前請參閱「特殊需要考生的特別考試安排申請指引」。
Please read the Application Guide on Special Examination Arrangements for Special Needs Candidates before completing this form.

(2) 考生若獲豁免應考某科部分試題，其證書將設有附頁，列出獲豁免部分的資料，惟考生獲豁免應考的原因不會列於證書上。
Where a candidate has been exempted from part(s) of the requirements of an examination, the details will be listed on a second page to the candidate's certificate. However, the reason for granting the exemption will not be recorded on the certificate.

請考慮為以下本校學生作特別考試安排
I recommend the following student of my school for your consideration for special examination arrangements:

學生姓名
Name of Student: ______________________ (英文 English) ______________________ (中文 Chinese)

性別
Sex: ______

出生日期
Date of Birth: ______________________ 日 Day / 月 Month / 年 Year

香港身分證號碼
H.K. Identity Card No.: ______________________

住址
Home Address: ____

____

電話號碼
Tel. No.: ______________________

殘障情況
Nature of Disabilities: ____

____

教統局檔案編號及診斷/評估日期
EMB Case Number and Date of diagnosis / assessment: ______________________

需要何種特別安排
Special arrangements requested: ____

____

在校內用何種輔助器材學習
Resource(s) or equipment presently used by the applicant at school: ______________________

____

其他相關資料（例如該申請人曾否使用特別輔助考試器材或校內圖書館的特別設施等）
Other relevant information (e.g. whether the applicant has used any special examination aids, school library facilities, etc.):

____

{如有補充資料，可在附加紙張上填寫 Please use supplementary sheet(s) for additional information (if any)}

若以前曾申請特別安排，請註明申請年份及考試名稱
Name & year of previous examination in which application for special arrangements was made (if any): ______________________

2007年香港中學會考報考科目
Subjects to be taken in the 2007 Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination:

科目編號 Subject Code	科目名稱 Subject Name	應考語文 (中/英) Version(C/E)

科目編號 Subject Code	科目名稱 Subject Name	應考語文 (中/英) Version(C/E)

申請人簽署
Signature of Applicant: ______________________

日期
Date: ______________________

校長簽署
Signature of Principal: ______________________

學校名稱
Name of School: ______________________

日期
Date: ______________________

Form CE004B

香港中學會考及香港高級程度會考特殊學習障礙考生特別考試安排申請
Application for Special Examination Arrangements in the HKCEE and HKALE from Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities

評估報告
Assessment Report

香港中學會考/香港高級程度會考(刪去不適用者)
HKCEE/HKALE (Please delete as appropriate.)

考試年份
Examination Year: ____________

學校
School: ____________

班別
Class: ____________

考生姓名
Name of Candidate: ____________

香港身分證號碼
H.K.I.D. Card No.: ____________

出生日期
Date of Birth: ____________

特殊學習障礙紀錄
History of Specific Learning Disabilities

1. 如考生在學習讀寫的過程中有特殊困難，請列出有關紀錄(例如以往的評估結果)或附上有關文件。
Please indicate any history of the candidate having specific difficulties with the learning of literacy skills (e.g. previous assessment results) or attach relevant documents.

____

____

閱讀/書寫技能
Reading/Writing Skills

(請於適當方格內加上✓號)
(Please put a ✓ in the appropriate box.)

2. 請評估考生於以下範疇中的能力及就其能力與其他同齡學生作出比較：
Please assess the candidate's ability in each of the following areas in comparison with his/her age peers:

	明顯在平均以下 Grossly below average	平均以下 Below average	平均/平均以上 Average/ above average
a. 閱讀準確度 reading accuracy	☐	☐	☐
b. 閱讀速度 reading speed	☐	☐	☐
c. 書寫的可辨認程度 handwriting legibility	☐	☐	☐
d. 書寫速度 handwriting speed	☐	☐	☐

3. 考生的口語表達能力是否比其文字表達能力顯著優勝？
Is the candidate's ability to express himself/herself orally significantly better than in writing?

有顯著差異 Significant Discrepancy	有些微差異 Mild Discrepancy	沒有差異 No Discrepancy
☐	☐	☐

校內支援
Support from School

4. 學校有否在過去兩年內於*校內*考試提供特別考試安排予考生？(如有的話，請於下面列明詳情)　有 Yes ☐　無 No ☐
Have special arrangements been made available to the candidate in *internal* examinations in the past two years?
(If yes, please specify details below)

科目/卷別 Subject / Paper	*校內考試特別安排(請於適當位置填寫)# Special Arrangements in Internal Examinations (please tick/specify as appropriate)#* 請於適當方格內加上✓號# Please tick the appropriate box(es)# 1	2	3	4	5	其他(請在方格內註明詳情) 6: Others (please specify details below)

\# 較長的作答時間 *1 = Time allowance*
應試時短暫休息 *2 = Supervised breaks*
試場的特別安排 *3 = Special arrangements in examination centres*
試題的特別安排 *4 = Special format of question papers*
特別答題簿 *5 = Special answer books*
其他 *6 = Others*

5. 你認為學校於校內考試所作的特別安排是否已照顧考生的需要？　是 Yes ☐　否 No ☐
Do you think the school's arrangements in the internal examinations have adequately addressed the need of the candidate for his/her disabilities?
如否，請列明哪些需要未獲照顧：
If *no*, please specify the needs not yet addressed: ____________

6. 你認為學校於校內考試所作的特別安排有否對其他同學構成不公平？　有 Yes ☐　否 No ☐
Do you think the school's arrangements in internal examinations have given the candidate an unfair advantage over his/her schoolmates?
如有的話，請列明特別安排構成哪方面的不公平：
If *yes*, please state what kind of unfair advantage: ____________

此部分由心理學家填寫 This part to be filled in by the psychologist.

]知評估
ɔgnitive Assessments

曾作的測試
Test(s) administered: ______

測試日期
Date(s) administered: ______

測試結果
Test results: ______

]前的評估(最近兩年)
urrent Assessment (within two years)

(請於適當方格內加上✓號)
(Please put a ✓ in the appropriate box.)

考生是否被評估為
Has the candidate been assessed to have

- 有特殊學習障礙
  Specific Learning Disabilities? 有 Yes ☐ 無 No ☐
- 其他已知診斷(如有的話，請註明：)
  Other known diagnoses (if *yes*, please specify: ______) 有 Yes ☐ 無 No ☐

評估日期
Date of Assessment: ______

本人確定上述評估結果仍然有效並附上申請人最近期的心理評估報告副本。
I confirm that the diagnosis is still valid. A copy of the latest psychological assessment of the applicant is attached.

心理學家姓名
Name of Psychologist: ______

服務機構
Organisation: ______

資歷（例如：專業學會會員資格）
Qualifications (e.g. professional membership): ______

考評局或會要求提供證明文件作核對用。The HKEAA may ask for documentary proof.

心理學家簽名
Signature of Psychologist: ______

日期
Date: ______

:港中學會考/香港高級程度會考特別考試安排建議
ecommendations for Special Examination Arrangements in the HKCEE/HKALE

就考生的特別考試安排作出建議前，請參閱考評局印發的「為學障考生提供服務」資料單張(有關單張可從考評局網頁 www.hkeaa.edu.hk 下載)。
(請於適當的方格內加上✓號及列明詳情。)
Before summarising below the recommendations of special arrangements for the candidate, please refer to the leaflet "Providing services to candidates with specific learning disabilities" (the leaflet may be downloaded from the HKEAA web site: www.hkeaa.edu.hk).
(Please tick the relevant boxes and specify details against each ticked box.)

☐ 較長的作答時間 (如獲准，筆試可獲延長百分之二十五的時間，多項選擇題則為百分之十五；如考生需要更長的作答時間，請列明所需的時間及原因)
Time allowance (normally 25% for written papers and 15% for multiple-choice; if more allowance is needed, please state the amount and give supporting reasons) ______

應試時短暫休息 (適用於獲較長作答時間的考生。一般而言，只設於九十分鐘或以上的考試，通常為每四十五分鐘有五分鐘休息時間 — 如要求不同，請列明需要詳情及原因。)
Supervised breaks (Applicable to candidates with time allowance; normally, a 5-minute break is given for every 45 minutes of examination for examinations lasting 90 minutes or more — if different, please state details of the proposed breaks and give supporting reasons.)

☐ 需要 Required ☐ 不需要 Not Required

______

☐ 試場的特別安排
Special arrangements in examination centres ______

☐ 試題的特別安排
Special format of question papers ______

☐ 特別答題簿
Special answer books ______

☐ 其他
Others ______

:名 Signature: ______ 日期 Date: ______
校長 Principal

****

:名 Signature: ______ 日期 Date: ______
家長 Parent

______ 日期 Date: ______
考生 Candidate

香港中學會考及香港高級程度會考特殊學習障礙考生特別考試安排申請
Application for Special Examination Arrangements in the HKCEE and HKALE from Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities

評估報告
Assessment Report

香港中學會考/香港高級程度會考 (刪去不適用者)
HKCEE/HKALE (Please delete as appropriate.)

考試年份
Examination Year: ______________

學校
School: ______________

班別
Class: ______________

考生姓名
Name of Candidate: ______________

香港身分證號碼
H.K.I.D. Card No.: ______________

出生日期
Date of Birth: ______________

特殊學習障礙紀錄 History of Specific Learning Disabilities

1. 如考生在學習讀寫的過程中有特殊困難，請列出有關紀錄(例如以往的評估結果)或附上有關文件。
Please indicate any history of the candidate having specific difficulties with the learning of literacy skills (e.g. previous assessment results) or attach relevant documents.

____

____

閱讀/書寫技能 Reading/Writing Skill

(請於適當方格內加上✓號)
(Please put a ✓ in the appropriate box.)

2. 請評估考生於以下範疇中的能力及就其能力與其他同齡學生作出比較：
Please assess the candidate's ability in each of the following areas in comparison with his/her age peers:

	明顯在平均以下 Grossly below average	平均以下 Below average	平均/平均以上 Average/ above average
a. 閱讀準確度 reading accuracy	☐	☐	☐
b. 閱讀速度 reading speed	☐	☐	☐
c. 書寫的可辨認程度 handwriting legibility	☐	☐	☐
d. 書寫速度 handwriting speed	☐	☐	☐
e. 默書/串字 dictation/ spelling	☐	☐	☐
f. 文字表達/寫作 written expression / writing composition	☐	☐	☐

3. 考生的口語表達能力是否比其文字表達能力顯著優勝？
Is the candidate's ability to express himself /herself orally significantly better than in writing?

有顯著差異 Significant Discrepancy	有些微差異 Mild Discrepancy	沒有差異 No Discrepancy
☐	☐	☐

校內支援 Support from School

4. 學校有否在過去兩年內於*校內*考試提供特別考試安排予考生？(如*有*的話，請於下面列明詳情)
Have special arrangements been made available to the candidate in *internal* examinations in the past two years? *(If yes, please specify details below)*

有 Yes ☐ 無 No ☐

科目/卷別 Subject / Paper	校內考試特別安排 (請於適當位置填寫)# Special Arrangements in Internal Examinations (please tick/specify as appropriate)# 請於適當方格內加上✓號# Please tick the appropriate box(es)# 1	2	3	4	5	其他(請在方格內註明詳情) 6: Others (please specify details below)

\#
1 = 較長的作答時間 Time allowance
2 = 應試時短暫休息 Supervised breaks
3 = 試場的特別安排 Special arrangements in examination centres
4 = 試題的特別安排 Special format of question papers
5 = 特別答題簿 Special answer books
6 = 其他(例如：以電腦代替書寫) Others (e.g. use of computer instead of writing)

• 你認為學校於校內考試所作的特別安排是否已照顧考生的需要？
Do you think the school's arrangements in the internal examinations have adequately addressed the need of the candidate for his/her disabilities?

是 Yes ☐ 否 No ☐

如否，請列明哪些需要未獲照顧：
If *no*, please specify the needs not yet addressed: ______________

• 你認為學校於校內考試所作的特別安排有否對其他同學構成不公平？
Do you think the school's arrangements in internal examinations have given the candidate an unfair advantage over his/her schoolmates?

有 Yes ☐ 否 No ☐

如有的話，請列明特別安排構成哪方面的不公平：
If *yes*, please state what kind of unfair advantage: ______________

此部分由心理學家填寫 This part to be filled in by the psychologist
(曾於會考因學障而獲得特別考試安排的高考生，若所申請的特別考試安排與會考相同，申請時無須心理學家填寫此部分)
(HKALE candidates who have been given special examination arrangements in a previous HKCEE will not need to have this part completed by the psychologist if they apply for the same special examination arrangements)

1. 以前曾作的評估
Previous Assessment

(請於適當方格內加上✓號)
(Please put a ✓ in the appropriate box.)

	測試日期 Date administered	測驗名稱 Test administered	測試結果 Results	結論 Conclusion
智力 Intellectual Functioning				正常? Normal? 是 Yes ☐ 不是 No ☐
讀寫能力 Reading & Writing				讀寫障礙? Dyslexia? 有 Yes ☐ 無 No ☐ 其他 Others ☐ (______)

2. 目前的評估(考試前三年內)
Current Assessment (within three years before the examination)

	測試日期 Date administered	測驗名稱 Test administered	測試結果 Results	結論 Conclusion
智力 Intellectual Functioning				正常? Normal? 是(根據近期的評估) Yes ☐ (As recently assessed) 是(根據以往的評估) Yes ☐ (As previously assessed) 不是 No ☐
讀寫能力 Reading & Writing				讀寫障礙? Dyslexia? 有 Yes ☐ 無 No ☐

其他已知診斷(如有的話，請註明：)
Other known diagnoses (if *yes*, please specify: ______________________) 有 Yes ☐ 無 No ☐

3. 本人確定該考生有讀寫障礙及需要在公開考試中有特別考試安排。現附上考生最近期的心理評估報告。
I confirm that the candidate has specific learning disabilities in reading & writing (Dyslexia) and is in need of special examination arrangements in public examinations. The latest psychological assessment report of the candidate is attached.

心理學家姓名
Name of Psychologist: ______________________ 服務機構 Organisation: ______________________

資歷 (例如：專業學會會員資格)
Qualifications (e.g. professional membership): ______________________
考評局或會要求提供證明文件作核對用。The HKEAA may ask for documentary proof.

心理學家簽名
Signature of Psychologist: ______________________ 日期 Date: ______________________

香港中學會考/香港高級程度會考特別考試安排建議 Recommendations for Special Examination Arrangements in the HKCEE/HKALE

註： 特別考試安排只提供予經評估確定有讀寫障礙的考生
Note: Special examination arrangements will only be made for candidates with confirmed diagnosis of Dyslexia.

• 就考生的特別考試安排作出建議前，請參閱考評局印發的「為學障考生提供服務」資料單張（可從考評局網頁 www.hkeaa.edu.hk 下載）。
Before summarising below the recommendations of special arrangements for the candidate, please refer to the leaflet "Providing services to candidates with specific learning disabilities" (may be downloaded from the HKEAA web site: www.hkeaa.edu.hk).
(請於適當的方格內加上✓號及列明詳情。Please tick the relevant boxes and specify details against each ticked box.)

☐ 較長的作答時間 (筆試一般可延長 25%，多項選擇題可延長 15%；如考生需要更長的作答時間，請列明所需的時間及原因)
Time allowance (normally 25% for written papers and 15% for multiple-choice; if more allowance is needed, please state the amount and give supporting reasons) ______________________

應試時短暫休息 (適用於獲較長作答時間的考生。一般而言，只設於 90 分鐘或以上的考試，通常為每 45 分鐘有 5 分鐘休息時間 — 如要求不同，請列明需要詳情及原因。)
Supervised breaks (applicable to candidates with time allowance; normally a 5-minute break for every 45 minutes for examinations lasting 90 minutes or more — if different, please state details of the proposed breaks and give supporting reasons.)
☐ 需要 Required ☐ 不需要 Not Required

☐ 試場的特別安排
Special arrangements in examination centres ______________________

☐ 試卷的特別安排：
Special format of question papers(QP): ☐ 單面印制 One-side printing ☐ 放大至 A3 enlarged to A3 ☐ 顏色試卷 coloured QP ______________________

☐ 特別答題簿
Special answer books ______________________

☐ 以電腦代替書寫 - 原因為：
Use of computer instead of writing the reason is:

☐ 字跡難以辨認
Illegible handwriting
(請提供考生近期校內中、英文科手寫作文測驗/考試樣本各一份，供考評局考慮)
(Please provide a copy of the candidate's handwritten Chinese/English composition work in a recent internal test/exam for the HKEAA to consider)

☐ 書寫速度極慢
Extremely slow handwriting speed
(請提供職業治療師/醫生報告作為證明)
(Please provide report from occupational therapist/medical practitioner as supporting evidence)

☐ 其他原因
Other reasons ______________
(請註明原因及提供證明文件)
(Please specify and provide supporting documents)

☐ 其他
Others ______________________

簽名 Signature: ______________________ 日期 Date: ______________________
校長 Principal

****

簽名 Signature: ______________________ 日期 Date: ______________________
家長 Parent

______________________ 日期 Date: ______________________
考生 Candidate

10.9.2007 Annex 5
(para. 5.17)

Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)

Membership List (2007/08)

	Name & Organisation
Chairman	Dr Francis Cheung, MH 張永明 Deputy Secretary General, HKEAA
Members	Ms Tsang Suk-man 曾淑雯 Educational Psychologist, EDB
	Dr Chan Yat-hung 陳日雄 Educational Psychologist, EDB
	Mrs Becky Chiu 陳美賢 Clinical Psychologist, Department of Health
	Ms Eva Chan 陳淑明 Educational Psychologist, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Schools
	Prof Connie Ho 何淑嫻 Professor, Department of Psychology, The University of Hong Kong
	Ms Chan King 陳璟 Principal, SKH Li Ping Sec School
	Mr Ling Kin-chun 凌健真 Principal, Ho Lap College
	Dr Cheung Kwong-yuen 張光源 General Manager – Assessment Development, HKEAA
	Ms Margaret Hui 許婉清 General Manager – School Examinations & Assessment Division, HKEAA
	Mrs Christina Lee 李王瑋 Assistant General Manager - Assessment Development, HKEAA
Secretary	Ms Jessie Yeung 楊淑貞 Senior Manager – School Examinations & Assessment Division, HKEAA

香港考試及評核局

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Appeal Panel for Special Needs Candidates

特殊需要考生事務上訴委員會

2007-2008 Membership

Chairman 主席：

Mr. Joseph Lau 劉啟泰先生
(Department of Health)

Members 成員：

Mr William Yip 葉錦元先生 (School)

Miss Chan Shung-ho 陳崧好小姐 (School)

Ms Eugenie Woo 胡御珍女士 (EDB)

Ms Ramona Sze 施美鈴女士 (School)

Ms Lam Kwai Lan 林桂蘭女士 (Parent)

Secretary 秘書：

Ms Jessie Yeung 楊淑霞女士 (HKEAA)

香港考試及評核局
HONG KONG
EXAMINATIONS AND
ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

香港灣仔軒尼詩道一百三十號修頓中心十二樓
12/F, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road
Wan Chai, Hong Kong
傳真／Fax: (852) 2591
電話／Phone: (852) 2834 9922

Annex 6
(para.8.23)

Phone:

Ref.: CE/ ./2007

26 February 2007

The Principal

Dear Principal

Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination 2007
Application for Special Examination Arrangements

I refer to the application from candidate ___ ___ ___ and would like to inform you that the case has been considered by the HKEAA Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities (the Task Group).

After careful consideration of all relevant documents and information, the Task Group was of the view that the information provided could not lead to the conclusion of specific learning disabilities. Hence, the application for special examination arrangements in the 2007 HKCEE was not accepted. The candidate will be arranged to sit for the HKCEE at ordinary centres with no special examination arrangements.

Please note that candidates who are not satisfied with the results of their applications may apply for a review in writing on or before Wednesday, **7 March 2007**, giving reasons and supporting documents (where applicable). Such cases will be reviewed by an independent Appeal Panel. The decisions of the Appeal Panel, which should be the final outcome of the cases, will be conveyed to the schools/candidates concerned on or before 27 March 2007.

I should be grateful if you would inform the candidate accordingly. In case you have any questions concerning the above, please contact Ms Katherine Ha at 3628 8922.

Yours faithfully

Judy Cheung (Ms)
Manager
School Examinations and Assessment Division

Letter L 2007

香港考試及評核局
HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

香港灣仔軒尼詩道一百三十號修頓中心十二樓
12/F, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road
Wan Chai, Hong Kon
傳真／Fax: (852) 2591
電話／Phone: (852) 2834 9922

Phone:

Ref.:

2 March 2007

Dear Principal

Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination 2007
Application for Special Examination Arrangements

I refer to the application from candidate ____________________ and would like to inform you that the case has been considered by the HKEAA Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities (the Task Group).

After careful consideration of all the relevant documents and information (including the speed test results), it has been decided that the following special examination arrangements be made for the candidate:

1. To sit all papers at special centres.
2. To be given an extra time allowance of
   (1) 65% for conventional papers in Chinese.
   (2) 45% for conventional papers in English.
   (3) 35% for MC papers of Geography, Economics, Mathematics and Commerce.
   To be given prolonged pauses in the Chinese Language (Papers 3 and 5) and English Language Listening Tests.
   (Please refer to the attached timetable for the details.)
3. A break of 5 minutes per 30 minutes for any examinations lasting 90 minutes or more.
4. To be provided with enlarged answer sheets.
5. To be provided with enlarged question papers.
6. To be allowed to write on alternate lines.
7. To be allowed to write on alternate pages in answer books.
8. To circle MC answers on the question papers.

The Task Group noted that the candidate requested to be allowed to use the software "聽寫王" in the written papers. However, the request cannot be accepted since this violates the assessment objectives.

Please note that candidates who are not satisfied with the results of their applications may apply for a review in writing on or before Wednesday, 7 March 2007, giving reasons and supporting documents (where applicable). Such cases will be reviewed by an independent Appeal Panel. The decisions of the Appeal Panel, which should be the final outcome of the cases, will be conveyed to the schools/candidates concerned on or before 27 March 2007.

I should be grateful if you would inform the candidate accordingly and pass a copy of this letter and other relevant documents to him/her for reference. In case you have any questions concerning the above, please contact Ms Katherine Ha at 3628 8922.

Yours faithfully

Judy Cheung (Ms)
Manager
School Examinations and Assessment Division

Letter L 2007